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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

BY

ANTHONY GENGE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDY AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1991

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine how effective superintendents administer their school systems. Thirteen of the most effective superintendents in the province of Alberta were identified by a panel of experts.

The primary sources of data were semi-structured extensive interviews and pertinent system documents. The extensive interviews were all audio-recorded and transcribed. Analysis required repeated readings of transcripts and listening to tapes. The responses were noted, counted, grouped, and regrouped to ascertain major themes.

The findings indicated that the daily work of these effective superintendents was characterized by involvement in a great number of activities. In spite of this diversity, they had distinct priorities and definite ideas on how to achieve them. They tolerated diversions but they had a clear focus and knew how to reach their goals. One of the main pressures of the job was to separate the role of the board from the role of the superintendent. These superintendents were continually under pressure because of excessive workloads.

Superintendents used a variety of formal and informal data sources to judge their effectiveness and that of their school systems. They were formally evaluated by their boards. They also solicited feedback from staff, from the community, and in a few cases from students, as part of their performance assessment. Other staff were assessed mainly by those to whom they were responsible.

Effective superintendents had clear visions for their school systems. They realized that people were their main resource and that accessing that resource to the fullest required "people skills." This required individuals of high integrity, sound knowledge bases, strong communication skills including listening, and a clear sense of direction. Visibility on school sites was considered a crucial part of maintaining effectiveness.

To be effective, superintendents were required to be facilitative, consultative, a team member, communicative, and interested in the curriculum and instructional program. This

necessitates that training institutions deliver programs aimed at enhancing superintendents' performance in interpersonal relationships. Their political environments appeared to be less turbulent than those portrayed in many of the earlier writings. The impression was gained that the setting of the school systems had a substantial effect upon the objectives and behavior of the superintendents in the study.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Superintendents occupy a key and unique position in the formal organization of school systems. As chief executive officers, some manage multi-million dollar enterprises, administer large numbers of employees, and are in a position to substantially influence the effectiveness of their systems; others manage much smaller enterprises and have very different task assignments. The uniqueness of the position stems from the fact that superintendents have no peers within the system. The occupant of this position must possess a vision that is broad in perspective and thus different from that of all other employees. This sphere of influence extends to student achievement, the primary purpose of schooling.

Because of the effect this position can have on the school system, a greater understanding of how effective superintendents administer their systems could contribute to the development of improved educational experiences for students. Recent research on improving school performance has focused far more on individual schools and principals than on school systems and superintendents, although, many experts (e.g., Allison, 1989; Boich, Farquhar, & Leithwood, 1989; Bridges, 1982; Hoyle, 1988; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986) have called for more research on the role and work of superintendents. Researchers in both Canada and the United States are now responding to these suggestions.

According to Konnert and Augenstein (1990), leadership is the essence of the superintendency. Although a great deal has been written on this topic, the study of leaders and leading is still a prime focus of organizational theorists and researchers. Immegart (1988) suggested "that in future there are advantages to examining not only real situations but also of focusing on the act of leading or what leaders do" (p. 273).

Theorists, researchers, writers, and practitioners have devoted considerable time and energy to the notion of increasing the effectiveness of organizations. Spray (1976) stated that "Barnard (1937) and Weber (1947), and members of the 'classical school' of organizational theorists (Fayol, 1949; Gulick, 1937; Taylor, 1911; Urwick, 1943) all placed an emphasis upon organizational efficiency" (p. 1). However, the focus shifted from efficiency to effectiveness when researchers started to use the methods of the social sciences. Hoy and Miskel (1982) maintained "that for the past one hundred years, writers representing both the private and public sectors have expressed concern about the effective and efficient operation of virtually every type of organization" (p. 319).

Student achievement and organizational performance are of prime interest to educational administrators. Studies on school effectiveness (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Murphy & Hallinger, 1985; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Weber, 1971) all emphasized the key role of the principal in improving the performance of schools. Similarly, the office of the superintendent has been viewed as pivotal in increasing the effectiveness of school systems. (See, for example, Allison, 1989; Aplin & Daresh, 1984; Awender, 1985; Boich, Farquhar, & Leithwood, 1989; Cohen, 1987; Coleman & LaRocque 1989; Crowson, 1987; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Cuban, 1984; Hallinger & Murphy, 1982; Konnert & Augenstein 1990; March & Miklos, 1983; McCloud, 1984; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Wirt, 1990)

Superintendents perform a variety of roles, but, according to Miklos (1983), the instructional role holds the most promise for enhancing the organizational effectiveness of school systems. The notion that the interest and involvement of the superintendent in the instructional program can result in increasing district effectiveness is attractive and is finding some support in recent studies. There now appears to be a plausible basis in research for the notion that district administrators can and "do make a difference" in the core areas.

The major purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of effective superintendents concerning how they administred their school systems. Thirteen of the "most highly organizationally effective" superintendents in Alberta were identified by accumulating the recommendations of a panel of 14 experts. These experts were senior officials of Alberta Education (central and regional offices), and senior staff of both the school trustees' and teachers' associations. The identified superintendents were then asked to participate in the study. Extensive semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 13 superintendents to obtain opinions about how they increased their effectiveness. In addition, the contents of relevant school system documents were analyzed in order to obtain understanding of the context and procedures for each system. The information obtained is presented collectively, so no individuals or systems are identified.

The proposed study was expected to provide improved theoretical understandings about the relationships among leader behavior, organizational effectiveness, and various situational variables. It was also expected to provide practical knowledge about what superintendents can do to improve the effectiveness of their school systems.

Need for the Study

Several theorists and researchers have recently proposed that a need exists for a more detailed examination of the superintendency with a view to investigating how superintendents increase the effectiveness of their organizations. For example, in their recent book entitled The Canadian School Superintendent, Boich, Farquhar, and Leithwood (1989) concluded that "in spite of the intimate relationship between school districts and their leadership, the nature and evaluation of the superintendency has been largely neglected by scholars, writers, and those responsible for professional preparation" (p. 1). Further, Bridges (1982) stated that

> A superintendent stands at the apex of the organizational pyramid in education and manages a multi-million dollar enterprise, charged with the moral and technical socialization of youth, aged 6-18. Despite the importance of this administrative role

> to education and society, less than a handful of studies analyzed in this review [of 322 research reports from dissertation abstracts and published journals] investigated the impact of the chief executive officer. This topic merits both reflection and empirical examination since nothing of consequence is known about the impact of the occupants of this role. (p. 26)

Six years later, Hoyle (1988) expressed much the same sentiments when he stated that "the role of superintendents is one of the least thoroughly researched roles in educational administration" (p. 8). Also, Murphy and Hallinger (1986) observed that "research on the superintendency is remarkably thin, while research on the leadership role of the superintendent is sparser still" (p. 214). Similarly, Allison (1989) stated that, "Further and more detailed examinations of the work and work environment of chief school officers would appear worthwhile" (p. 306). Crowson and Morris (1990) in an on-going study concluded that "there has been surprisingly little inquiry into how superintendents handle the internal organizational affairs of their school districts" (p. 7). Holloway (1990) considered that still relatively few researchers are specifically interested in superintendents' behavior. Presenters of papers at the 1990 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association at Boston in the spring of 1990 commonly noted that research on superintendents was a relatively recent phenomenon. After a period in which research related to educational reform focused mostly upon schools and principals, the superintendency started to receive substantial attention from some researchers in the late 1980s. Wissler and Ortiz (1988) observed that in the business sector, preoccupation with reform efforts was with the executive levels, whereas the superintendent was noticeably absent in reform efforts in education.

In his earlier review, Bridges (1982) noted that very few studies have analyzed the superintendent's effect on schooling and student performance. He challenged researchers to "identify management practices which have been used by administrators to produce a particular outcome and to estimate the relative effectiveness of these practices in producing desired results" (p. 29). Wirt (1990) echoes the words of Bridges when he calls for "another round of effective school research, this time focused on effective superintendents" (p. 71). The advice of Wirt was adhered to in conducting this study. The research situation at the time this study was initiated had changed very little from that described by Bridges.

In summary, a need exists for researchers to advance a body of knowledge which will give school district administrators a clearer idea of just what it is they can do that will "make a difference." Research and literature from both Canada and the United States are relevant to this study because of the overall similarity of the organization of their school systems.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of effective superintendents concerning their leadership role and the actions they take to increase the effectiveness of their school systems. These perceptions were expected to provide important practical and possibly theoretical formulations about effective school system leadership.

Statement of the Research Questions

The major research question of this study was as follows: How do the most organizationally effective superintendents administer their school systems? That is, in which activities, by what methods, and in which interactions do these superintendents become involved in performing their roles? The term "organizationally effective" was used when identifying the superintendents for the study, but throughout the text "effective" only is used.

In order to obtain information relevant to the major question, the opinions of 13 of the most organizationally effective superintendents in Alberta were obtained, pertinent literature was reviewed, and relevant documents from the 13 school systems were examined.

The specific research questions are stated below.

1. What are the most important priorities of superintendents and how are these achieved?

2. What is meant by the term "effective educational leadership" and how is this reflected by superintendents in school systems?

3. What criteria (benchmarks, indicators) are used by superintendents to judge the overall effectiveness of their school systems?

4. What criteria do superintendents use to judge their own and others' effectiveness?

5. What are the major constraints (barriers, obstacles) which tend to reduce the effectiveness of superintendents and how are these constraints overcome?

6. What is the nature of superintendents' interaction with each important stakeholder group?

7. What are superintendents' most important bases of influence when they deal with board members and other educators?

8. What are superintendents' most important personal values and how do they reflect these in their school systems?

9. How does holding the position of superintendent affect their personal lives?

Definitions

School system effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness--more specifically, school system effectiveness--is clearly a multidimensional phenomenon. There is a lack of agreement on the meaning of the term, on its assessment, and on the means of its attainment. Cameron and Whetten (1983, p. 263) postulated that definitions of organizational effectiveness have "historical recordings, not prescriptions." Models, definitions, criteria, indicators, characteristics, and indices are many and varied. Cameron and Whetten stated that "a single definition is neither possible nor desirable" (p. 263). Some writers have defined organizational effectiveness in terms of goal achievement, others in terms of successful environmental interactions, while still others have used a combination of the two. For purposes of this study, the definition of effectiveness by Georgopoulous and Tannenbaum (1957) was selected because of its comprehensiveness. They stated that effectiveness is "the extent to which an organization, given certain resources and means, fulfills its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain upon its members" (pp. 536-537).

Superintendent effectiveness. The office of the superintendent is subject to close scrutiny during any examination of school system effectiveness. Studies have demonstrated that effective leaders have concern for both the fulfillment of organizational goals and the fulfillment of individual wants, needs, dispositions, and expectations. Using this perspective and adapting it to school systems, superintendents are effective to the extent to which they fulfill organizational goals and at the same time facilitate personnel needs, i.e., they "can initiate structure without sacrificing consideration" (Halpin, 1958, p. 3).

Perception. Perceptions shape human attitudes and behavior, they guide and direct action, their effects are pervasive and unavoidable. Johns (1988) defined perception as "the process of interpreting the messages of our senses to provide order and meaning to the environment" (p. 81). Litterer's (1965) similar definition was adopted for this study, that is, perception is a process by which people "form a picture or an understanding of the world around them" (p. 42).

Values. Johns (1988) distinguished between positive and negative values. He defined a positive value as anything "for which the individual strives, approaches, extols, embraces, or voluntarily consumes," while a negative value was seen as anything which an "individual avoids, escapes from, deplores, rejects, or attacks" (p. 118).

School system. This term refers to an educational unit which was responsible for the delivery of educational services to a group of students in a defined geographic area. The personnel consisted of elected officials, staff, and students. A system is usually comprised of a number of schools which housed students from kindergarten to senior high school. The term "school system" is used throughout this thesis to include school districts, school divisions, and counties.

Superintendent. Refers to the chief executive officer of the school system.

Assistant Superintendent. The term "assistant superintendent" also includes deputy superintendent.

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to obtaining information relevant to effectiveness from superintendents and pertinent documents.

2. The study focused upon the superintendent's role in increasing system effectiveness, while recognizing that many others, e.g., trustees, parents, other administrators, and teachers were also key actors.

3. Only full-time superintendents who were responsible for only one system, who were not on leave, and who had been in their positions for at least two years were eligible to participate in the study.

4. The 13 most organizationally effective superintendents were identified through contact with a limited number of experts who were employed by educational agencies outside school systems.

5. Information was obtained from the 13 superintendents identified as the most organizationally effective, while fully realizing there were other organizationally effective superintendents in the province.

Assumptions

1. Superintendents are aware of the factors related to their own effectiveness and can make judgements as to how this effectiveness can be enhanced. Prior research, reported by Gunn and Holdaway (1986), had shown that school principals in Alberta were willing to

rate their own effectiveness on a variety of factors. It was anticipated that Alberta school superintendents would be equally forthcoming in this regard.

2. Superintendents are aware of the criteria necessary for school district effectiveness and were able to judge how they can increase this effectiveness.

3. Superintendents are aware of inhibiting barriers upon their own and district effectiveness and were able to judge the means of reducing some of these barriers.

4. Superintendents will be honest and sincere in their responses to the interview questions.

Limitations

1. Accuracy of the findings were limited to information obtained through the analyses of perceptual data supplied by superintendents and from relevant documents.

2. Some of the most effective superintendents may not have been included in the list of 13.

3. Priorities, effectiveness criteria, nature of interactions, bases of influence, and effect on personal life were likely to be most affected by circumstances and events which occurred in the immediate past.

4. Comparative data were not obtained from superintendents who were identified as the least effective.

5. The transcripts from the semi-structured extensive interviews were not examined to determine underlying assumptions and latent meanings.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis contains ten chapters. This chapter provides an introduction to the study. Pertinent theoretical and research literature are examined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides detail of the research design, methodology used in selecting participants, the pilot study, and the collection, analyses and reporting of data.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 provide a description and analyses of the data.

The final chapter provides a summary of the thesis, its conclusions, and some implications for the theory and practice of educational administration as they relate to superintendent effectiveness and future research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following areas of literature were selected for review: (a) studies of superintendents, (b) influence, (c) organizational effectiveness, (d) leadership, and (e) constraints. Studies of superintendents are obviously relevant for this study. In order to move organizations in directions of their choosing, superintendents must be able to influence employees and others. An understanding of the bases of influence will facilitate this movement. The literature on organizational effectiveness had relevance for this study because of the intimate relationship between the leadership of the organization and the organization's performance. According to Konnert and Augenstein (1990) and others, the essence of the superintendency is leadership. Barriers or constraints prevent superintendents from accomplishing some of their tasks. Ways and means of overcoming these constraints are therefore relevant. The individual elements are not isolated, they interact and inter mesh in a dynamic fashion as shown in Figure 2.1.

Superintendency

Originally, superintendents in Canada were hired by, and were responsible to provincial authorities. This responsibility to external authority shifted, however, to local school boards during the past three decades (Boich, Farquhar, & Leithwood, 1989). The lure of decentralization led to the consolidation of school systems into larger educational units, which were claimed to be both more educationally effective and economically efficient. This perhaps more than any other trend led "to the professionalization of the modern superintendency" (Boich et al., 1989, p. 3).

Superintendents now became corporate executives rather than public servants. Many were chief executive officers of large corporations, hiring hundreds of employees and managing budgets of significant magnitude. Boich et al. (1989) observed that "in essence, the superintendent had to take charge rather than take orders--to become concerned not only with doing things right, but with doing the right things" (p. 7). School boards became responsible for self-determination, rather than being regulated externally. This local control facilitated a shift in school districts from being rigid hierarchies to situations in which both trustees and school system administrators became more accessible to teachers and the public. Under this arrangement these groups gained influence in, and control over decisions affecting the school. March and Miklos (1983) stated that "more levels are perceived to be exerting increased control over more decision items" (p. 11). Given the evolving nature of the school superintendency and the dynamics of the systems over which they preside, it is obvious that the position will continue to be challenging, frustrating, exhilarating, time-consuming, interesting, threatening, and totally demanding.

In the report of his inquiry into the Alberta school superintendency, Downey (1976) noted that "many uncertainties, ambiguities, misperceptions, and even conflicts attend the superintendent's role and position in the local school system" (p. 31). Shortly after Downey's report was released, Ingram and Miklos (1977) conducted a study commissioned by Alberta Education entitled Guidelines for Employment of School Superintendents. They emphasized that the superintendent's role involved executive, managerial, educational, policy development, and public relations functions and they saw the superintendent as being extremely important in maintaining effective relationships (pp. 22-23, 31, 65). The Alberta School Act (1988) stated that the superintendent is the chief executive officer of school boards, but it makes no further specification of duties.

Nature of Superintendents' Interactions

Weick (1976) suggested that educational organizations are loosely coupled. By loose coupling, he conveyed the image that, while coupled events or organizational aspects are responsive and related to each other, each event or aspect retains its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness. Weick (1982), however, contended that there are some facets of school organizations which are tightly coupled.

Cuban (1984), Murphy and Hallinger (1986), Coleman and LaRocque (1990), and Roberts (1991), while agreeing that school districts are loosely linked organizations, suggested that superintendents had a wider range of linkage mechanisms available to them than has been recognized in the past. Weick (1976) noted that evidence is accumulating " that instructional effectiveness at the school and district level may be enhanced by strengthening organizational coupling in the area of curriculum and instruction" (p. 229). Sirotnick (1984) maintained that schools need district and other kinds of support. Coleman and LaRocque (1990) echoed much the same sentiments when they stated that "district administrators should be both supportive and demanding" (p. 57). Gunn, Holdaway and Johnson (1988) advised principals to "remember that central office personnel are here as a resource when needed" (p. 4). Crowson (1987) reported that effective superintendents exercised "direct, tightly structured control over curriculum and instruction," however he asserted that "most have little direct influence in their schools, especially in the domains of curriculum and instruction" (p. 60).

Superintendents as boundary spanners interact with the environment, but they do so selectively. Lam (1989) noted that "in order to be meaningful to organizational members the external context must have a direct relationship with the specific tasks or the functions performed by them" (p. 2). Boundary spanners process relevant information from the environment and filter it into the organization. Ratsoy (1980) stated that "in education, boundary spanning typically is part of the role set for administrative personnel and is certainly an important responsibility of those who are at the nexus of communications for organizations" (p. 4). Miklos (1977-78) acknowledged that, "the image which outsiders have of an organization is crucial to its survival and to its ability to acquire resources required for effective performance" (p. 2). Tushman (1977) identified "the need for the innovating system to gather information and transmit information to several external informal areas" (p. 587). His extensive review of the literature and his research emphasized the importance of boundary spanners and the need for effective communication across organizational boundaries.

The task of "public relations"--communication to and from the organization to its various publics--closely resembles the notion of boundary spanning. While the task of public relations was not cited as the most important function of the superintendent, it ranked rather highly. Green (1988) concluded from his review of the research findings of four studies--one Canadian and three American--that,"human relations skills were important in both countries" (p. 35). Vigil (1977), cited in Green (1988), reported that board presidents agreed on three important tasks for superintendents. First in importance was human relations skills, followed by skills for the administration of the total school program, and understanding the skills of subject areas. A study of 56 metropolitan school districts was conducted by Koza and Levy (1977-78) in the state of Michigan. They found that the key to community influence over school policy lay in the degree to which the day-to-day activities of a school district and its community interpenetrate. They agreed however, that due to the emphasis on expertise at the upper levels of the organization, there is probably more interpenetrating at the lower levels. In contrast, Martin and Willower (1981) in their intensive observation of five school principals reported that principals spent "comparatively little time on affairs external to the school organization" (p. 69). Throughout their investigations it was clear that "insiders dominated the contact network of principals" (p. 83). The domesticated nature of the school permitted the principals to be relieved of the burden of "selling" the school to the public at large.

The interaction process which occurred at school board meetings in Alberta was examined by Holdaway (1969). He found that superintendents made between 10-21% of all statements at those meetings, and concluded that superintendents were perceived to be potentially influential, that their effectiveness at meetings depended upon expectations held for them, and that they behaved in widely different ways. This suggests that many different styles of operation can lead to effective outcomes. The interactions of six superintendents with school board members outside board meetings were examined by Holloway (1990). He found that there was "considerable variance in interactions with [individual] board members" (p. 18). In addition he found that all respondents interacted informally with their board members about ten times per month; all mailed newsletters to their boards; all expressed disdain for social interaction with trustees; most used the telephone to share with individual members more immediate concerns or issues; some used special reports (letters) on a weekly or bi-monthly schedule; there was wide variance in the ways respondents interacted with trustees regarding agenda items; the greatest variance occurred in the practice of offering recommendations on action items; and the factors that appear to be relevant in explaining the observed behaviors include (a) the individual respondent, (b) tradition or established practice, (c) the expectations of the board, and (d) elements of the setting.

After conducting a very comprehensive study in the United States, Pitner and Ogawa (1981) reported that, "superintending is communicating" (p. 49). Most of the communicating occurred in dyads, was characteristically brief and fragmented, and although it usually involved subordinates, considerable communication occurred between members of the board of education and the community at large. The six superintendents observed were reported to have spent 80% of their time in direct interaction with people. In general, superintendents felt that feedback from the community was the most important measure of their success or failure, although they admitted it was a most subjective and impressionistic gauge. They concluded that "the literature on leadership ignored the broader contextual influences, and therefore greatly inhibited the description of important dimensions of organizational leadership, at least as it manifested itself in the school superintendency" (p. 61). They found that superintendents, by monitoring their environments, were able to move their organizations in directions of their own choosing.

By using a structured observation technique based on Mintzberg's study, Duignan (1979) observed eight superintendents in the province of Alberta for a total of 34 days. The purpose of the study was to record how superintendents spent their working time. He found that the subjects spent approximately 70% of their total working time in verbal contact with individuals and groups as follows: 30.7% with central office staff; 23.3% with trustees; 13.3% with school administrators; 12.9% with teachers; and only 0.4% with students.

In summary, these studies showed that there was considerable interaction among superintendents and many different constituent groups.

Aspects of the Superintendency

The competencies required by provincially appointed superintendents in Alberta were studied by Campbell and Holdaway (1970). In that study, the 56 superintendent respondents tended to emphasize competencies related to the ability to demonstrate an understanding of human behavior, whereas the 53 board chairmen tended to emphasize competencies more related to supervision of educational activities and personnel.

Duignan (1979) reported that the activities of the superintendents were predominantly executive or administrative in nature. Even those activities which were classified as educational were usually associated with organizing or planning curricular matters, rather than with working at content. He stated that, "The superintendent's administrative behavior is not as planned and organized as is suggested in the literature on the processes of administration" (p. 207), but, "He is a central figure in the school system, and as such, must act as spokesman, arbitrator, mediator and politician, internally as well as external to the system" (p. 210). Duignan (1979) suggested that this lack of organization may stem from the following dilemmas facing the superintendent: balance between pace and quality;

dealing with current/emergent issues and long-range issues; efficient use of time and running a humanistic organization; and apportioning time between managerial and educational issues. Duignan advanced the following tasks of superintendents as those most commonly agreed upon in the studies that he reviewed: public relations activities; advising the board; budget preparation; instructional improvement and evaluation; personnel selection, development, and evaluation; pupil accounting; managing, or advising on, property, equipment and supplies; and policy development and execution. Similarly, according to Cymbol (1986), Alberta superintendents were expected to perform a wide range of tasks. Both trustees and superintendents attached great significance to the educational leader role which involved working with professional staff in providing high quality education to students.

In another Alberta study, Green (1988) concluded that the important tasks performed by superintendents were policy development, evaluation, working with trustees, public relations, managing staff, and business management. He found that the size of the school district "produced significant differences in task expectations" (p. 199). Except for the lack of focus on instructional leadership, Green's list of tasks was similar to Duignan's.

McLeod (1984) reported that in Ontario

> confusion as to whether the senior administrator should perform as a 'mover or shaker' or as a 'functionary' often leads to disillusionment and mutual distrust. Without realizing it, the chief executive's frustration and suspicion closely approximate that which he created in school trustees who resent his perception that they should be prevented from 'dabbling in administration' or from 'tampering with the curriculum'. (p. 187)

Allison (1989), in explaining the roles and responsibilities of central office administrative positions in Ontario, found that superintendents were "overwhelmingly generalist in nature" (p. 304), and were system-focused rather than school-focused.

Aspects of Effective Superintendents

In a study conducted in the San Francisco area, Hannoway and Sproull (1978-79) discovered that relatively little occurred in schools as a result of the coordination and control of activities by central office management. Furthermore, they found that the influence of central office was felt most heavily at the school site in areas other than presumably the "core" tasks of curriculum and instruction. The activities of management seem only to be marginally related to the production activities of the school. Similarly, 11 years later, Wirt (1990) stated that "superintendents give very little evidence that they actually lead or that their leadership affects student achievement, . . . instead superintendents undertake much more the role of system maintenance accomplished by micro-management of district operations" (p. 3). However, the studies reported below are not as pessimistic in their attitude toward the effectiveness of the superintendent's office in improving the educational experiences of students.

In the process of ascertaining "how superintendents felt about their work," Willower and Fraser (1979-80) interviewed 50 superintendents by telephone in Pennsylvania. Thirteen questions were posed, and three major findings were reported. First, superintendents were frustrated with paper work; second, they were nostalgic for the classroom and students; and third, they were concerned about the variations of tasks associated with their work. When asked to name the single thing they had done which they were most proud of, 33 responded "the improving of instruction for students."

Hallinger and Murphy (1982) examined the behavior of 10 elementary school principals in a working class, suburban, school district in California in which the superintendent had designed and implemented policies to promote instructional leadership. The researchers reported a high level of instructional leadership behavior performed by these principals. These findings were at variance with many findings prior to this date, i.e., that, "Principals tend to be relatively uninvolved in managing curriculum and instruction" (Murphy and Hallinger, 1982, p. 3). These researchers proposed that the primary cause of the high level of instructional leadership in this district was due to the superintendent's policies. However, this hypothesis could not be proved or disproved by the design of the study. The next step in this type of research, they suggested, must be to examine the nature of this relationship in order that more useful guidance can be given to superintendents and principals concerning the aspects of their jobs which "make a difference."

Three years later, Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (1986) examined the activities of superintendents in 12 instructionally effective school districts in California. The superintendents in this study were influential in establishing procedures for selecting staff. In all but two of the largest districts superintendents were personally responsible for supervising and evaluating principals. This process was almost totally oral and visual. All visited schools regularly and met with principals individually. Group meetings for the purposes of controlling principals' activities, to check the progress of school and district goals, to project an instructional focus, and to communicate important norms were frequently held. During school visits, superintendents were involved in the following activities: reviewing the curriculum and instructional programs, reviewing facilities, checking perceptions, communicating, team building, addressing problems, disseminating information, role modelling, and showing interest in classroom activities. Using the same data, Peterson, Murphy, and Hallinger (1987) found that seven of the twelve districts required all teachers to use a specific method of instruction. Also, superintendents carefully monitored the use of the preferred teaching model through ongoing staff training, development and evaluation. One superintendent reported that "he expected his directors to be out every day checking on the implementation of the district curriculum and teaching model." These findings suggested very tight linkages between the managerial level and the "technical core."

Sapone (1983) asked teachers, school administrators, superintendents and board members in Western New York and Ontario to respond to a list of the eight major characteristics associated with effective schools. Not surprising, one of the most important findings was the need for schools to have a strong principal. If principals were to be successful and recognized as school leaders, then the superintendent "must provide a comprehensive plan in which the principal had been granted a meaningful role" (p. 66). They must be provided with adequate resources and authority, time to work closely with others in a goal planning model, the opportunity to manage conflict, time to integrate a cluster of demands, responsibility to plan and execute decisions that affect human, social and environmental conditions, encouragement to formulate action plans with teachers and parents in dealing with a fluid school system, and help for principals to integrate new knowledge regarding effective educational and managerial practices.

Aplin and Daresh (1984) conducted an eight-week case study of one suburban superintendent who had been identified as an effective educational leader by a nominating panel. For the most part, the leadership of this superintendent was demonstrated in indirect ways. He was viewed by most individuals associated with the district as both an effective business manager and a superb educational leader. His educational leadership role was effectively carried out by holding the instructional program as the highest priority of the system. A norm of equity was evident in the district, due mainly to the superintendent's influence. Principals reported that the superintendent was constantly reminding everybody "that doing the same thing for everyone is not equal education." He viewed local control of schools as important and acted consistently in line with his stated personal belief that the quality of any decision could be improved if free and honest disclosure of views could occur among all interested parties. The basic goals of the district were clearly known and communicated to all stakeholders. Teachers perceived that the emphasis that principals were placing on the instructional program as positive. Principals in turn, were influenced by the emphasis the superintendent attached to instruction in his policies. A chain reaction occurred. Cuban (1984) echoed similar sentiments in emphasizing the role expectations of principals and superintendents in developing instructionally effective districts when he stated that

> Given that the literature on effective schools suggests that no school can become effective without the visible and active involvement of a principal hip-deep in the elementary school instructional program, then it also seems likely that no school board approving policies aimed at system-wide improvement can hope to achieve that condition without a superintendent who sustains a higher than usual involvement in the district's instructional program. (p. 136)

Coleman and LaRocque (1990) reported a "strong district presence" in high-performing school systems. District administrators in these districts were busy setting achievement expectations, monitoring school performance data closely, and making school accountability a prominent issue.

Positive effects on student performance occurred by realigning the instructional program in the entire district, according to Cohen (1987). He posited that, "The lack of excellence in American schools is not caused by bad teaching, but by not aligning properly what teachers teach, what it is they intend to teach, and what they assess as having been taught" (p. 16). Wight (1987), as reported in Hoyle (1988), believed that we should be looking at "outcomes," not processes. He indicated that the best ways to achieve outcomes would be to "(a) train teachers and principals, (b) give them expected goals or outcomes, and (c) let them design the programs for the students they have" (p. 16).

Highett surveyed 57 superintendents in South Australia in 1989. His findings were similar to those reported by Sapone (1983) in that the principal was again seen as "the nexus of the communication channels within the school community, and as such, was vital to increasing the effectiveness of the school" (p. 68). However, superintendents thought there must be systematic, regular, and reliable support for principals. "This support should be the focus of the superintendent's activities" (Highett, 1989, p. 224). Principals in this study indicated that it was the role of the superintendent to give them meaningful feedback about the performance of their duties and to manage the in-service education of principals so that it was not left to chance.

A comparative case study of three school districts in Georgia was conducted by Pajak and Glickman (1989) to discover dimensions of school improvement at the district level. In each district the researchers found that "the superintendent and central office supervisors were key figures in stimulating and facilitating efforts to maintain and improve the quality of instruction" (p. 62). The specific value espoused by each superintendent was simply "the children come first." Each felt it crucial to keep the public informed and garner its support in increasing the financial commitment for improving instruction in the district. Attempting to explain the "how" of improvement, Pajak and Glickman proposed three major dimensions evident in all three school systems: (a) an instructional dialogue--talking about students, lessons, and curriculum was the norm, (b) an infrastructure of support that promoted this dialogue, and (c) varied sources of instructional leadership. Contrary to the effective schools research (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Weber, 1971; Purkey & Smith, 1983; and Sapone, 1983) which demonstrated that principals were key in school improvement, Pajak and Glickman's data suggested that principals were most often secondary to central office supervisors, lead teachers, assistant principals for instruction, department and grade level heads, and teams of teachers. They concluded that "what is important is to create district expectations of professional dialogue and support so that educators in all positions in a school system can share in that inventiveness and express that commitment" (p. 64). The superintendent is in a key position to exert this influence.

Coleman and LaRocque (1990) examined 10 school districts in British Columbia which were changing to high performing districts. These changes may be captured in a single phrase, "tighter linkage between levels" (p. 175). They further suggested that, "The school district is becoming an institution capable of shaping schools and schooling, and of having a considerable impact upon the educational attainment of students, and hence upon their lives" (p. 176).

Crowson and Morris (1990), with the help of four school district chief executives, identified 10 experienced practicing superintendents and conducted lengthy "life-history" interviews. The inquiry, which is not yet finished, led to the identification of the following five dimensions of the superintendency:

> 1. The superintendent's relationship with the surrounding community--striking us as intensely normative rather than overtly political in its day-in and day-out interactions.
>
> 2. The superintendent's involvement with the local school board--surfacing as a much more cooperative albeit negotative, relationship than the extant literature implies.
>
> 3. The risk-constrained nature of the superintendency--a little-investigated phenomenon of the role, with potentially important behavioral consequences vis-a-vis information flow, the reward structure, and the allocation of administrative effort.
>
> 4. The superintendent-principal relationship--where our preliminary findings supports an "administrative distance" between central office and the school-site.
>
> 5. The phenomenon of superintendent preparation--with hints that training in the "soft" dimensions (e.g., "people-skills") of leadership may be of more importance than training in "hard" skills (e.g., technical knowledge). (pp. 55-56)

These researchers suggested that, based on these dimensions, it is likely that "local schooling will move increasingly toward a more balanced system of both centralized and decentralized control--with new images of what it means to be a strong superintendent alongside new visions of school-site autonomy and teacher professionalism" (p. 57). A second observation made was that a "softer administrative style than has traditionally been attributed to the superintendency" (p. 59) was emerging. Superintendents in future, they suggested will be more consultative--"working with others toward a shared vision, nurturing the development of leadership at lower levels, facilitating, finding common ground, listening and persuading--these are among the behaviors of modern day chief executives in local education" (pp. 59-60). They further stated, "The scholarly community may be well behind education's practitioners in an appreciation of today's demands for a more considerative form of executive leadership" (p. 60). In summary, they suggested that the traditional conflict and administrative control perspectives in research on superintendents' leadership should be replaced by one that is more consultative, more sharing of visions, more nurturing of lower level leadership, more listening, and more persuading.

Jackson and Crawford (1991) summarized the factors characteristic of improving and effective districts in the extant literature as follows:

> 1. Formal district goals with an emphasis on student learning.
>
> 2. Extensive staff development programs with emphasis on principals' supervisory skills and teachers' instructional skills.
>
> 3. Formal and systematic staff evaluation systems with criteria tied to the accomplishment of district goals.
>
> 4. Replacement of ineffective principals and teachers.
>
> 5. Standardized district curriculum and superintendents' personal involvement in curriculum and instruction.
>
> 6. Formal systems for monitoring progress on district goals and student outcomes.
>
> 7. Superintendent acquisition of funds for educational improvement and centralized budget control. (pp. 16-17)

In summary, superintendents in effective school districts may be more tightly coupling the instructional program than the literature would suggest. Willower and Fraser (1979-80), Hallinger and Murphy (1982), Sapone (1983), Aplin and Daresh (1984), Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (1985), Murphy and Hallinger (1986), Cohen (1987), Peterson, Murphy and Hallinger (1987), Coleman and LaRocque (1990), Crowson and Morris (1990), and Jackson and Crawford (1991) all found that even if superintendents were "not hip deep" (Cuban, 1984) in the instructional program they were at least involved to a considerable extent. Recent studies indicated that the superintendent had moved away from being a "business manager" to being an "educational leader," at least in effective school districts. These studies also showed that concentration upon the work of a small number of superintendents involving detailed descriptions, as was done in this study, was favored by respected researchers. Also the contingency theory was seen to be highly relevant.

Traditionally, the instructional program was left mainly in the teachers' realm, and of course it still is, but principals with the support of the effective schools literature of the past decade are now moving in with much more intensity. Superintendents should work with and through principals, over whom they have some control, if they wish to have a positive effect upon schooling. A caveat of all of this control by superintendents is the possible negative impact this heavy aligning hand could have on the "ethos" of the district and the morale of staff and students. Can the cry of superintendents for greater productivity drown out the requests of principals, teachers, and students' for more self-determination? Hoyle (1988) noted "misgivings about the iron fist method to make schools more effective if the teaching of higher order thinking skills, new information about brain research, and creative attention to learning styles are crushed in the grip" (p. 16). Excessive control by superintendents may prove unwieldily, when the trend is toward more site-based management, consultation, and principal and teacher empowerment. More evidence is needed about the long-range effect of the superintendent's urge to control instruction on the teachers' feeling of professional freedom. Too much control could very well have negative consequences.

Training and Selection of Superintendents for the Role

The combination of theory and practice can be viewed as the mark of a true professional. McGregor (1960) eloquently expressed his opinion in this way:

> the professional draws upon the knowledge of science and his colleagues, and upon knowledge gained through personal experience. The degree to which he relies upon the first two of these rather than the third one is one of the ways in which the professional may be distinguished from the layman. (p. 3)

Wirt (1990) stated that, "Professionals of all kinds have been given the right to define the reality of their services, including making four major decisions; defining its quality, determining its quantity, training its practitioners, and evaluating its effectiveness" (p. 6). Similarly, Salley (1979-80) noted that, although superintendents do basically the same things, they differ as to the priority they attach to their respective tasks. He stated that "in the selection process it was assumed that if boards presented candidates with their perceptions of the relative importance of the functions to be performed, gave information on some of the operating constraints, and provided concrete opportunities for candidates to classify these perceptions, then a better match could be made between the superintendent's expectations and the requirements of the position" (p. 4).

Aplin and Daresh (1984) found that educational leadership was displayed in very subtle ways. The educational leader provided direction to the district through the "consistent adherence to a well-defined set of principles and values" (p. 26). Even though some of these principles and values were not always well received by teachers, principals, board members, or the general public. In-service education for superintendents who work in this milieu should be organized in such a way as to provide collegial support by other district administrators who share some of these same lonely goals.

Some research indicates that school executives have not been trained at universities to cope with the intricacies and complexities inherent in curriculum and instructional leadership. Degree programs tend to be heavily skewed in favour of educational management courses. Khleif, (cited in Murphy 1987), noted that in an elite training program for superintendents only 1 of the 12 required courses was in the area of curriculum, and none dealt with supervision or instruction. Andes, (cited in Murphy 1987), found that "60 % of the 108 superintendent training programs in his sample required one or fewer courses in the areas of supervision, curriculum, and instruction combined" (p. 2). These same authors reached the following conclusions:

> Our investigation indicates that the training of our most powerful educational leaders, our superintendents, is directed mainly to concerns other than those of the learning of students. In fact, a great many superintendent training programs appear to exclude any in-depth study of curriculum, instruction, or supervision. (pp. 2-3)

Hoyle (1988) called for the cooperation of "university professors, practicing administrators and state policy makers in the vital role of preparing school leaders" (p. 20). Even if school boards and provincial authorities do not specify it in their guidelines for the appointment of superintendents, the message is clear, i.e., superintendents are to gain skills in the area of instructional improvement. Training in this area is likely to increase sensitivity toward educational leadership. A lot will be gained through cooperative ventures to solve the perennial problems of transfer from the university classrooms to the work situations.

Three doctoral students, Scalfani (1987), Collier (1987) and Burnham (1988), as cited by Hoyle (1988), in a study entitled "In Search of Excellence in the Superintendency," identified the performance areas and skills required for effective superintendents. They found that the role of the superintendent cannot be viewed as a single issue separate from the district context. The study demonstrated that the present practice of preparing all students for the superintendency in the same way is inadequate. Beyond the generic core, preparation and in-service programs should be different for students who wish to lead districts in certain locations with unique characteristics in geographic composition and enrollment sizes.

It was apparent that no one should be selected as the chief executive of a school district without demonstrated commitment, experience, expertise, and talent in the promotion of the primary business of any school system--quality education. Also boards should realize that the superintendent is the prime person in each school district in developing a sense of mission, establishing a positive district ethos and overseeing the implementation of that ethos. The research herein reported has shown that there are individuals capable of having a marked, positive impact on the quality of education in a school district. Criteria utilized when selecting a new superintendent must be directed toward the expectation that educational leadership is the proper duty of an effective administrator.

Summary/Conclusion

The school superintendent often works in a hostile and turbulent environment. Different individuals and groups have varied and often conflicting perceptions of the role. Writers such as Aplin and Daresh (1984), Murphy and Hallinger (1986), Boich et al. (1989), and Duignan (1979) have noted the diversified tasks and importance of the role. The superintendent must be prepared to operate in a milieu of diversity, ambiguity, and risk taking.

Concurrent with the uniqueness of the organization are general social trends in which the superintendent must operate. Boich et al. (1989) presented four broad social trends: an information-based society, aging population, increased cultural diversity, and equal rights protection. The school system will have to develop and grow within the context of these mega trends which are already occurring, and will continue to occur in the future of Canada. These trends will pressure the school system to adjust and adapt to certain desired ends. Boich et al. stated that, "These consequences warrant conceptualizing the superintendent of the future as an organizational designer" (p. 170). This organizational designer must be capable of performing the following types of leadership: ethical, symbolic, managerial, empowering, and reflective. The superintendent who is willing and capable of wearing this mantle, which has been too long unworn (Boich et al., 1989) will be the **effective educational leader** of this country in the future.

Power, Influence, and Authority

Superintendents are clearly in positions of authority. It is incumbent upon them to use this authority to influence the organization to achieve desirable goals. It is therefore important for leaders of organizations to understand the bases they must rely upon to influence constituents. Most writers attempting to describe power, influence, and authority refer to the works of Max Weber. Weber viewed power as the probability that one actor within a social relationship would be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.

Pichler (1974) defined power as "the individual or collective ability to affect the thoughts, emotions, or actions of one or more other persons" (p. 401), whereas Abbott and Caracheo (1988) saw "power as a force that determines behavioral outcomes in an intended direction in a situation involving human interaction" (p. 241). Johns (1988) viewed "power as the capacity to influence others who are in a state of dependence" (p. 426). He further noted that power "can flow in any direction", that is from the lower levels of the organization to the higher levels or vice versa.

Abbott and Caracheo (1988) noted that "terms such as power, authority, control, leadership, and influence are used interchangeably" (p. 230). Anyone wishing to gain a fundamental understanding of these terms must be prepared to cope with a literature that is illusive and at times chaotic.

Most social scientists tend to agree that power is the "capacity" to intentionally change or modify behavior in a relationship and that power is potential. When power is used, or becomes actual, it seems to take on some other form such as influence or force.

Bases of Power

French and Raven (1968) suggested that there were five types of power classified by their different bases: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. Other authors have identified similar bases, but with some variations. Etzioni (1961) formulated four kinds of power which he called coercive, utilitarian, normative, and social. There is considerable similarity between the topologies of Etzioni and of French and Raven. Hicks and Gullett (1975) offered a more succinct and broader classification of the kinds of power used in organizations. They suggested the following bases: physical, economic, knowledge, performance, personality, positional, and ideological. All of the above topologies emphasized the fundamental concept that power is personal and is always implemented by persons. Power is not exercised by organizations but by people acting in organizational roles.

Recently, authors such as Abbott and Caracheo see power as emanating from only two sources: "authority and prestige." Authority refers to the institutional element of power and prestige to the personal element. They stated that the "actualization of power, a power act, is what we call its exercise" (p. 242). The exercise of power becomes either an act of coercion or an act of persuasion. Coercion has compelling overtures while persuasion connotes rewarding images.

In conclusion, power is highly subjective, elusive as to accurate definition and difficult to quantify. The bases of power often overlap and an individual's total power can often result from a combination of a number of bases. Power is not necessarily associated with an "office" nor is it solely a personality trait. Power develops, depending on the situation, the circumstances, and the perception. When power is exercised it can be viewed as influence.

Organizational Effectiveness

According to Hannan and Freeman (1977), as a research area "organizational effectiveness is one of the strongest and most persistent themes in the literature of organizations" (p. 106). In their attempts to explain organizational effectiveness, researchers and practitioners have presented a number of labels, metaphors, definitions, and models. Many of these same writers have advanced lists of indicators, indices, or measures to help assess the extent to which organizations are effective. Daft and Wiginton (1979), cited in Cameron and Whetten (1983) stated that, "No single symbol, model, or metaphor can capture the complexity of organizations, so a variety of different ones are required" (p. 6).

Various labels or synonyms have been used to refer to effectiveness, including "excellence" (Peters and Waterman, 1982), "productivity" (Heaton, 1977), "efficiency" (Becker and Neuhauser, 1973), and "performance" (Cummings and Schwab, 1973). Of more importance, though, especially to the practitioner, are the variables which contribute to organizational effectiveness. Writers and researchers have attempted to present such a list.

Mott (1972) provided four criteria: (a) productivity, (b) adaptability, (c) flexibility, and (d) an overall effectiveness index comprised of the productivity, adaptability and flexibility measures. He asserted that "the effective organization is one in which both organizational and individual needs receive high priority [and that] there are usually a number of ways of organizing and leading that will yield approximately the same level of effectiveness" (p. 185). Further, he argued that, effective organizations "are those that produce more and higher quality outputs and adapt more effectively to environmental and internal problems than do other, similar organizations" (p. 17).

Employee ability and motivation were viewed as the main determinants of performance by Cummings and Schwab (1973). They also recognized the effect of environmental variables such as job design, supervision, fellow workers, compensation, working conditions, training, and evaluation on ability and motivation.

Siepert and Likert (1973) posited a relationship between causal variables--such as administrator behavior, policies, structure, and technology--and intervening variables--such as subordinate behavior and team interaction. The causal variables affect the intervening variables, which in turn have an impact on end results--such as educational performance, student dropouts, employee health, and staff turnover.

Becker and Neuhauser (1975) focused largely on input/output ratios, while Steers (1977, p. 46) identified 15 evaluative criteria of effective organizations as follows: adaptability, flexibility, production, satisfaction, profitability, resource acquisition, absence of strain, control over environment, development, efficiency, employee retention, growth, integration, open communication, and survival. He defined effectiveness as the "organization's capacity to acquire and utilize its scarce and valued resources as expeditiously as possible in the pursuit of its operative and operational goals" (p. 5). After an extensive review of the literature, Campbell (1977) presented 30 indices (criterion measures) of organizational effectiveness. Heaton (1977) explained the productivity of a human service organization by using only "four operating functions: input, processing, output, and timing and coordination" (pp. 45-46).

Dessler (1980) began his analysis of organizational effectiveness by examining the environment, work technology, and size of the organization. This, he believed, had an effect upon the nature of decision making and communication processes within the organization. The last set of variables affected two further sets--the motivation and compliance of its members. These variables when combined yield a measure of organizational effectiveness, but effectiveness was recognized as being contingent on three other sets of variables--leadership processes; group, intergroup, and conflict processes; and organizational change and development activities.

The advantages of both the goal-based and systems approaches to organizational effectiveness were acknowledged by Zammuto (1982). He proposed an evolutionary model for judging the performance of organizations whereby the element of time was taken into consideration. Zammuto contended that his evolutionary approach treated effectiveness as "the ability of an organization to satisfy changing preference of its [many and varied] constituencies over time" (p. 82). Because the preferences of the constituents change over time, as do the organizational constraints, "the goal is to continually to strive at becoming effective rather than be effective" (p. 161).

Peters and Waterman (1982) listed eight attributes that characterize excellent, innovative companies: had a bias for action, stayed close to the customer, encouraged entrepreneurship among workers, realized that productivity came through people, stuck to the tasks at hand, administrators walked the plant floors, had simple form lean staff, and had simultaneous loose-tight properties.

Clearly, within the last three decades, a number of indices and indicators of organizational effectiveness have permeated the literature. However only three general theoretical models are presented in the literature: the goals model, the systems model, and the eclectic model which is a combination of the first two.

Most writers such as Etzioni (1964), Steers (1977), and Zammuto (1982) supported the notion that organizations were effective to the extent that predetermined organizational goals, which were usually identified by key influentials such as administrators and controlling authorities, were accomplished. Scott (1981) suggested that this approach focused "on the number and quality of outputs and the economies realized in transforming inputs to outputs" (p. 319). Hoy and Ferguson (1985) suggested that this view rested on two assumptions: "first, rational decision makers in the organization are guided by a specific set of goals, and second, these goals are both few enough in number, and defined clearly enough to be understood and taken on by participants" (p. 118).

A major problem with the goals approach was the assumption that the stated goals of organizations coincided with those which were actually being pursued. Furthermore, many of the operational goals of organizations are not articulated or clearly communicated. Goals must be clearly understood if the effectiveness of organizations are to be realistically measured; this can be a serious impediment to this approach. Such criticisms have led many to conclude that the goals model for the study and evaluation of organizational effectiveness is inadequate. Because of this inadequacy, a systems model was proposed to assess organizational effectiveness, especially for organizations with unclear goals and uncertain technologies, such as educational organizations.

The systems model of organizational effectiveness is based on systems theory and postulates that the demands placed on organizations are numerous and complex. Hoy and Ferguson (1985) stated that, "It is impossible to define specific goals in any meaningful way, hence, the major concerns of organizations are to survive and grow" (p. 120).

Because both the goals and systems approaches had several weaknesses, an approach which combined the two--the eclectic approach--was proposed. These two approaches are regarded by many theorists and researchers as complementary to each other, e.g., Dessler (1980), Lawler et al., (1980), Hoy and Miskel (1982), Cameron and Whetten (1983), Ratsoy (1983), Ratsoy and Miklos (1984), and Hoy and Ferguson (1985). Hoy and Ferguson (1985) found this dual approach a useful "step in developing and refining a comprehensive framework for assessing organizational effectiveness" (p. 131).

Few scholars and researchers analyze organizations without referring to their environments. Parsons (1960) postulated that all social systems, if they are to develop and survive, must solve four problems: (a) adaptation--the problem of accommodating the environment, (b) goal attainment--the problem of setting and achieving goals, (c) integration--the problem of maintaining solidarity among elements of the system, and (d) latency--the problem of creating and maintaining the system's motivational and value patterns.

Clearly within the past two decades a considerable body of literature has emerged on the definition and assessment of organizational effectiveness. Effective organizations achieve goals or accomplish tasks in harmony with their environments. Recent writers place more emphasize upon people than early those who examined the phenomenon earlier.

The emphasis upon people has lured organizational leaders to become more concerned about notions such as culture and the empowerment of employees.

School District Effectiveness

Ratsoy (1983) attempted to bring together all the research that he reviewed in "an eclectic taxonomy of organizational effectiveness variables" (p. 3). He proposed the following five major categories of organizational effectiveness indicators:

> 1. goals, both stated and real because the latter may be different from the former;
>
> 2. other outcome measures, including satisfaction, absenteeism, and adaptability;
>
> 3. personnel characteristics, including--levels of professionalism, degree of attachment, personal motives, knowledge possessed, leadership behavior, decision making style, and communication skills;
>
> 4. organizational variables, including the nature of the work technology used, the design of the organizational structure; and
>
> 5. environmental variables, such as boundary spanning activity, the linkages with other organizations, the degree of stability or turbulence in the environment, the number and nature of financial personal, capital and additional inputs and outputs. (p. 3)

This model emphasized the interaction between the environment and the organization, and acknowledged the necessity of examining the inter-organizational linkages and boundary spanning activities. Ratsoy suggested that the principles of parsimony and simplicity should be guides in selecting effectiveness variables. He concluded his discussion by stating that "models like this one, as with organization theory generally, a contingency approach, which allows for tailoring to fit the given situation, may be best" (p. 6).

Another set of indicators was provided by Murphy, Mesa, and Hallinger (1984, p. 13), who offered the following "blueprint" for effectiveness in school districts:

> 1. Clearly defined academic goals and an emphasis on seeing that those expectations are widely distributed and followed.
>
> 2. Consistency in the district's instructional practices and curriculum.

> 3. A high degree of instructional and curricular expertise among district and site managers.
>
> 4. A district-wide system of monitoring student progress.
>
> 5. Mechanisms to increase the interdependence of staff around the philosophy, goals and practices of the district.
>
> 6. A district-wide philosophy about student discipline policies, practices and staff development to have this point of view implemented in the schools. (pp. 13-14)

Both Ratsoy and Murphy et al. emphasized goal achievement. Considerable divergence exist in the models from there onwards. Ratsoy's model appear to be process oriented, while Murphy's et al. emphasize consistency, expertise of managers, district wide monitoring and district wide philosophies. The latter model seeks conformity, thereby permitting assessments to be made. It appears to have more tangible elements making it more practical to implement. The effectiveness of school districts was frequently studied from the perspective of the superintendency. This office has come under close scrutiny during the current era of reform. Researchers and writers such as Hannoway and Sproull (1978-79), Duignan (1979), Cunningham and Hentages (1982), Hallinger and Murphy (1982), Aplin and Daresh (1984), Cuban (1984), McCloud (1984), Awender (1985), Murphy and Hallinger (1986), Cohen (1987), Allison (1989), Boich et al. (1989), Coleman and LaRocque (1990), Wirt (1990), Hord, Jolly, and Mendez-Morse 1990, Johnson 1990, Crowson and Morris (1990), Konnert and Augenstein (1990), Jackson and Crawford 1991, and Roberts (1991) have all highlighted the superintendency as pivotal in efforts to improve education in school systems. Discussions of school district effectiveness inevitably focus upon the role of the superintendent.

In summary, school system effectiveness is clearly a multi-dimensional construct. Researchers have not yet proposed a set of universalistic criteria, which, if attended to, will ensure its effectiveness. This may be because each school system is unique; for example every school system has unique traditions, beliefs, practices, and expectations.

Leadership

This study was obviously about leadership. According to Konnert and Augenstein (1990), leadership is the essence of the superintendency. A detailed review of the leadership literature was conducted, but because leadership has been extensively reviewed in many recent publications (e.g., Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1981; Hoy & Miskel, 1982; Lovell & Wiles, 1983; Immegart, 1988; and Konnert & Augenstein, 1990) only a brief summary of the major points of that literature is presented in this thesis. The focus of this review will be on the current literature, with only passing references to the earlier writings.

Definitions of leadership are almost as numerous as the number of researchers and writers engaged in its study, its analysis, or its reflection. Immegart (1988) noted that "Stodgill drew on over 3,000 sources in 1974" (p. 259). Burns (1978) stated that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (p. 2). In many respects leadership is whatever people believe it to be.

Traditional Approaches to the Study of Leadership

The study of leadership has moved from an essentially personal and historical perspective, i.e., the so called "great-man-trait" theory to the exploration of styles, behaviors, dimensions, situations (contingencies), and a variety of other approaches.

Researchers using the trait approach attempted to isolate specific traits of leaders which differentiated them from followers. Although no universal trait or sets of traits were found, Immegart (1988) reported that most analysts agreed that "intelligence, dominance, self confidence and high energy/activity levels are [traits] most often mentioned and commonly agreed on" (p. 261). Johns (1988) noted that, "The most crucial problem of the trait approach to leadership is its failure to take into account the situation in which leadership occurs" (p. 313).

The situational approach attempted to identify distinctive characteristics of the setting to which the leader's behavior may be attributed. Hoy and Miskel (1982) noted the relevance of structural properties of the organization such as size, hierarchical structure and formalization; organizational climate including openness, participation, and group atmosphere; and, subordinate characteristics including knowledge, experience, tolerance for ambiguity, responsibility, and power as important situational factors. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) posited that, "Leaders emerged not because of their own inherent greatness, but because time, circumstance, and place surround them" (p. 42).

This approach also had its shortcomings. House and Baetz (1979) stated that "no systematic conceptualization of the leadership environment has been developed" (p. 376). A heavy emphasis upon the situation was considered to be unduly restrictive and counterproductive to progress in research on leaders according to several writers. So, for the past four decades, most studies, according to Hoy and Miskel, "indicate that both personality and situational factors are important to leadership effectiveness" (p. 223).

The literature, as diverse as it is, supports the fact that there are two general and distinct categories of leader behavior--one concerned with people and the other with task achievement. Different labels have been attached to these two aspects by different writers. Barnard (1938) used effectiveness and efficiency; Cartwright and Zander (1953) used goal achievement and group maintenance; Etzioni (1961) used instrumental and expressive needs; and Stodgill (1963) used system-oriented and person-oriented as his two categories.

Leadership studies at Ohio State University revealed that leaders' behavior again could be reduced to two basic types--consideration and initiating structure. Johns (1988) noted that consideration "involves the degree to which the leader is approachable and shows concern for subordinates" (p. 315) and initiating structure "involves the degree to which the leader concentrates on group-goal attainment" (p. 31). Stodgill noted that effective leadership is characterized by both high initiation of structure and high consideration. Many educators tend to equate initiating structure with an authoritarian leadership style, but Halpin (1958) vividly demonstrated that the two are not identical:

> An effective leader can initiate structure without sacrificing consideration. Yet we repeatedly encounter superintendents who fear to take a stand, who hesitate to initiate structure, lest they be accused of being anti-democratic. This is nonsense, for the superintendents who adopt this attitude can quickly spot the phony who tries to hide his ineptness in the soggy oatmeal of a pseudo group process. (p. 3)

Concurrent with the studies at Ohio State University, research was carried out at the University of Michigan. While Ohio State University studies identified important leader behaviors and then tried to determine their effect on the performance and satisfaction of subordinates, the University of Michigan studies focused on subordinates and tried to identify leader behavior which would maximize performance and satisfaction.

Contingency theories of leadership were based on the concept that there was no one best way of leading and that effectiveness depended on the fit between the personality characteristics of the leader, the setting or the environment, and the nature of the subordinates.

Current Perspectives on Leadership

Managerial leadership consists of maintaining the enterprise, and includes such functions as "planning, organizing, allocating resources, supervising, and evaluating--in short dealing with routine" (Boich, et al., 1989, p. 42). These managerial functions were duly noted by earlier writers such as Fayol (1916), Gullick (1937), Barnard (1938), Newman (1951), Urwick (1966), Tead (1959), and Koontz and O'Donnel (1964). Boich et al. (1989) noted that "most leaders are conditioned to be of the managerial type" (p. 42), but what is needed if organizations are to be effective is a new emphasis upon symbolic or transformational leadership.

Burns (1978) noted that transformational leadership went far beyond management. He stated that a "transformational leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher order needs, and engages the whole person of the follower" (p. 4). Bennis (1984) presented the following competencies as characteristic of transformational leaders--management of attention, meaning, trust, constancy, purpose, and self. He stated that positive change in organizations "requires trust, clarity, and participation" (p. 27) and that "the basic ingredients of leadership are integrity, dedication, magnimity, humility, openness, and creativity" (p. 117). In addition to Mintzberg's eight prime leadership skills of--peer support, leadership, conflict resolution, information processing, unstructured decision making, resource allocation, entrepreneurial spirit, and introspection skills--Bennis added an "x" factor--"The leader knows what we want and what we need, before we do and expresses these unspoken dreams for us in everything he or she says or does" (p. 159).

Tichy and Devanna (1986) envisioned transformational leaders as having these qualities: (a) identifying themselves as change agents; (b) being prudent-risk takers; (c) believing in people; (d) being value-driven; (e) being life-long learners; (f) being able to deal with complexity, uncertainty, and ambiguity; and (g) being visionaries. Tichy and Ulrick (1984) succinctly summarized the qualities of transformational leaders in the following quotation:

> what is required of this kind of leader is an ability to help the organization develop a vision of what it can be, to mobilize the organization, to accept and work toward achieving the new vision, and to institutionalize the changes that must last over time. (p. 59)

Bennis and Nanus (1985) studied 90 leaders, 60 of whom were identified as successful. Besides being committed and credible, these leaders had a great capacity to deal with complexity. In addition, they stated that "all successful leaders seemed to have been good at selecting, synthesizing, and articulating an appropriate vision of the future" (p. 101).

In attempting to distinguish among the different types of leadership, Owens (1988) defined symbolic leaders as those who "communicate purpose, values, and significance to followers" (p. 158). "Cultural leaders focus on developing a strong organizational culture in which people believe strongly, with which they identify personally, and to which they gladly render their loyalty" (p. 158). Culture refers to the uniqueness of an organization, that is, its own personality. To build a culture a leader must take an organization's history, traditions and customs, develop their meaning and significance, preserve them, and develop new and expanded traditions. Konnert and Augenstein (1990) noted that "an organization's culture determines how things are done around here" (p. 70). Schein (1987) defined culture as

> a pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration--that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 9)

Similarly, Boich et al. (1989) stated that

> symbolic leadership involves creating an image of the enterprise; setting its mandate and mission; representing the image, mandate, and mission to other agencies; using communication and symbolism to diffuse criticism and to generate support; and personifying the enterprise both to its members and to the outside world. (p. 42)

In summary, according to Konnert and Augenstein (1990), transformational leaders are pro-active, creative, novel, and innovative . One can legitimately ask, are there great differences between transformational leaders and those who would be identified as "great men." Perhaps we are concentrating on the same types of leaders, but in the latter case with a better understanding of the characteristics, i.e., have we come full circle--were great leaders always transformational leaders. According to Bass (1985), the transformational leader "changes the organizational culture and yields performance beyond expectations" (p. 24). Leaders performing this role require foresight, hindsight, a world view, depth perception, peripheral vision, and revision (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). The current view of transformational leaders seem to possess many qualities identified under the great man theory. Have we come full cycle?

Educational Leadership

According to Cunningham (1985), "leaders in the future will want to lead" (p. 27) and educational leaders will need another prerequisite, i.e., "a healthy attitude toward children and their needs and toward society and its needs" (p. 27). He offered the following list of skills as needed by future educational leaders:

1. Be able to focus on the present and the future simultaneously.
2. Be able to bridge the gap between different interest groups.
3. Be able to scan, monitor, and interpret events.
4. Have appraisal skills.
5. Need intuition.
6. Be able to manage symbols.
7. Be a teacher.

Owens (1988) called for a need to extend the research on leadership beyond the contingency theories in the field of education:

> Recent research emphasizes the need for three additional forms of leadership in the educational organization . . . one of these is educational leadership . . . the second is symbolic leadership wherein the leader communicates purpose, values and significance to followers. The third form of leadership, cultural leadership, is focused on developing a strong organizational culture in which people believe strongly, and which they identify personally, and to which they gladly render their loyalty. (p. 158)

Successful leaders, according to Sergiovanni (1977), have a different mind set or "mindscape" than ordinary leaders. He defined mindscape as "one's image, view, theory, and set of beliefs which orients a person to problems, helps to sort out the important from the unimportant, and provides a rationale for guiding one's actions and decisions" (p. 118). He summarized the values of leadership as purpose, empowerment, power to accomplish, density, quality control, conversion, and simplicity. Klopt, Scheldon and Brennan (1982) presented a list of 20 characteristics as representative of educational leaders.

Coleman and LaRocque (1990) likened the good administrator to the "skilled gardener" (p. 197). Skilled gardeners operate in harmony with the natural world, but at the same time modify their patterns of development to ensure that the desired purposes are achieved. "The gardener uses time well, encourages the industry of others, and produces . . . valuable products" (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990, p. 197). These authors associated the word "productive" with the above image, rather than with that of the factory or the refinery. Schools were likened to gardens, if they were not tended they would grow wild with improper values and products and would get choked out by such things as the constraining forces of basketball, fund-raising, and teacher strikes.

Further, in order for superintendents to provide visionary leadership, Konnert and Augenstein (1990) stated that

> First, they must develop in themselves and others a sense of mission regarding where their system should be going and an understanding of what is important in the school system. Second, in becoming a visionary leader the superintendent must help the board, staff, students, and community to refine the myriad of creative and innovative ideas into a mission statement for the school. The mission statement must then be converted into goals that are understandable and achievable. The third stage is the motivational stage. The superintendent must motivate school personnel to accept and work toward the achievement of these goals. The community cannot be overlooked. (pp. 28-29)

Summary

In summary, leadership is a crucial topic in the literature of school administration. Definitions of leadership vary widely, as do the approaches taken to its study. Early studies focused on identifying traits, later, emphasis was placed upon the specific properties of the situation. Currently both leader traits and situational variables are considered important. Studies to determine the dimensions of leadership generally identify two distinct categories--concern for the task and concern for the individual.

Researchers attempting to advance a fuller understanding of what makes leaders effective have presented contingency models examining the link between a leader's personal traits and situational variables.

Effective educational organizations require leaders who can initiate, demonstrate, motivate, develop, provide, communicate, grow, view, and enjoy a job description vague enough to be all inclusive but difficult to fill. Effective educational leaders have recently been associated with terms such as transformational, symbolic, and cultural leaders.

Wirt (1990) offered an important concluding comment to leadership when he stated, "There clearly is no singular conception of leadership, certainly not of superintendents' leadership--that can be found in experience, rather that the concept of leadership is indeed situational is widely understood by practitioner and scholar alike" (p. 4).

Constraints Upon Action

Superintendents must ward of constraining forces if they wish to achieve maximum effectiveness. They must be able to identify these constraints and be able to lessen their negative influences. Eastcott, Holdaway, and Kuiken (1974) defined a constraint "as any more or less constant restriction upon an administrator's action or potential action: in some way the constraint impedes administrative action from being in line with theoretical principles" (p. 1). Murphy (1987) and Renihan and Renihan (1984) used "barriers" and "constraints" synonymously or near synonymously. In the context of effectiveness, Renihan and Renihan considered barriers (constraints) to be "threats to the achievement of effectiveness" (p. 3). Glass (1888) simply used the term "problems."

Eastcott et al. (1974) noted that the administrators were confronted with a wide spectrum of constraints "which have their origin in the personal, situational, political, financial, and value system characteristics of the organizational environment in which [they] work" (p. 1).

Types of Constraints

Renihan and Renihan (1984) identified four "potent threats to school effectiveness." The first threat was the recent preoccupation with standardization in "programs or student achievement" and how it has tended to depersonalize education. Second, competing interests of constituencies cause "power games" and shift the focus from the real issue. Third, we are by nature traditional and are reluctant to seek innovative solutions to educational problems. Fourth, the greatest barrier to effective schooling is found in administrators themselves, by neglecting to pay attention to many common criticisms, some of which they can do something about.

Murphy (1987) noted four problems with regard to administrators as instructional leaders. First, he stated "they are simply ill-prepared to assume the role" (p. 2). It is not surprising then that they tend to neglect the core areas of curriculum and instruction and concentrate on those areas for which they are better prepared. A second problem arises out of the nature of curriculum and instruction themselves. They are rarely, if ever, perceived as crucial issues. Third, he noted that the professional norms have constrained school administrators from involvement in instructional management. "The teachers are professionals; leave them alone to do their own thing (Murphy, 1987, p. 3). Finally, Murphy viewed superintendents and other central office personnel as offering few incentives to principals to become involved in the instructional program. Principals tend to be judged by their super-ordinates on how well they manage their buildings, the strength of their political skills, and finally their instructional leadership.

Nine constraints inhibiting school effectiveness were reported by Johnson (1988): insufficient time and excessive workload; insufficient educational and support services; students' characteristics; parents and social forces; central authorities; the competence, attitude, lack of commitment, lethargy and fear of change, longevity and poor teaching quality of staff; poor performance by principals; and organizational structure and inappropriate focus on educational issues.

The constraints on school effectiveness in Australia were reported by Highett (1989). Parents saw shortage of funds, parent apathy, poor communication among the various constituencies, lack of professionalism, lack of commitment on the part of staff, inappropriate curricula and poor quality of leadership as factors which inhibited school effectiveness. Principals viewed the constraining factors of school effectiveness as shortage of time, low staff morale, inadequate leadership by the Department of Education, inappropriate physical facilities, parent apathy, student conflict, and the lack of a behavioral management program. Superintendents produced the following list of inhibiting factors for ineffective principals: poor interpersonal and communication skills, inability to confront nonconforming staff, inability to relate to teachers as professionals, lack of vision and the inability to articulate school goals, non-learners without a personal professional development program, not prepared to question the level of attainment of the school, poor evaluation procedures, insensitive to the local community, too involved with administration to the detriment of other activities, narrow viewpoint, laziness as well as lack of personal credibility, lack of planning skills, promoted beyond their competence level, inappropriate use of positional power, cynicism about the future, and awaiting retirement. However, for principals in the effective category the superintendents saw the following as inhibiting school effectiveness: need to pay more attention to their mental health and lead more balanced lives; need for more system support; need for more flexibility in staffing; need for improvement in time management; self-doubt; too high an expectation of staff; lack of leadership and support from superintendents; lack of interpersonal skills; lack of personal security; and the extent of "closed-mindedness" in principals' thinking.

Glass, cited in Wirt (1990), reported widespread problems in the superintendency in middle-and small-sized districts in Illinois. These included lack of finances as the most inhibiting factor, inundation of state reforms with no or negative effects on student scores, high stress levels, and encroachment of boards upon administrative authority by trying to manage, but they reported no conflict over curriculum and instructional matters.

The study of constraints upon effective leadership is important in this study. Awareness of constraints and measures that can be taken to overcome them can improve the effectiveness of superintendents. The greatest barrier to examining superintendent effectiveness is perhaps the lack of models or a theoretical framework to show how an effective educational system leader should operate. This is made difficult or perhaps impossible because of the uniqueness of each organization and because of the unique personal characteristics of each leader.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 shows the relationship among the variables which have been identified in the literature review as pertinent to this study. The main foci of this framework are upon the behavior of the school superintendent and evaluation of superintendent effectiveness. In the figure the major categories of personal, intraorganizational, and extraorganizational forces, including constraints, which affect the behavior of superintendents, other employees, and trustees, are identified. The interactions between superintendents and others, involving power, influence, and authority relationships are identified. Also, because the thesis research heavily emphasized effectiveness, the "perceptual screen," which is based upon both personal opinions and research findings, is placed in the figure between behavior and evaluation of effectiveness. The leadership dimension is incorporated in with the superintendent's behavior variable. The interaction between effectiveness of the superintendent and effectiveness of the school system is also emphasized in this framework. Of course, the open systems nature of this framework must be recognized, even though it is not explicitly represented. Various feedback loops could also be included, but these were omitted in order to simplify the overall pattern of relationships.

It is important to realize the uniqueness of individuals with respect to personal factors such as needs, perceptiveness, experience, values/beliefs, intelligence, and stamina. This uniqueness determines how individuals behave in the superintendency and how other constituencies react to them. Furthermore, one's behavior changes over time as one confronts different situations and circumstances. Superintendents bring their personal skills and orientations to bear on the educational milieu in their efforts to improve educational programs. Everything that incumbents do should enhance their own and consequently the systems' effectiveness. Superintendent's leadership is assumed to be closely related to the effectiveness of school systems. This relationship, and the relatively small amount of research that has been conducted on superintendents, provided the rationale for the study.

In addition to bringing their own unique personal variables to job situations, superintendents are presented with roles, some of which are clearly specified while others are much more vague. Situational variables existing in the system and the environmental milieu influence superintendent effectiveness. System variables such as organizational structure, tasks, size, and resources bear directly upon superintendents' jobs; environmental variables such as the law, societal ethics, societal traditions, political climate, economic conditions, and community values also have an effect.

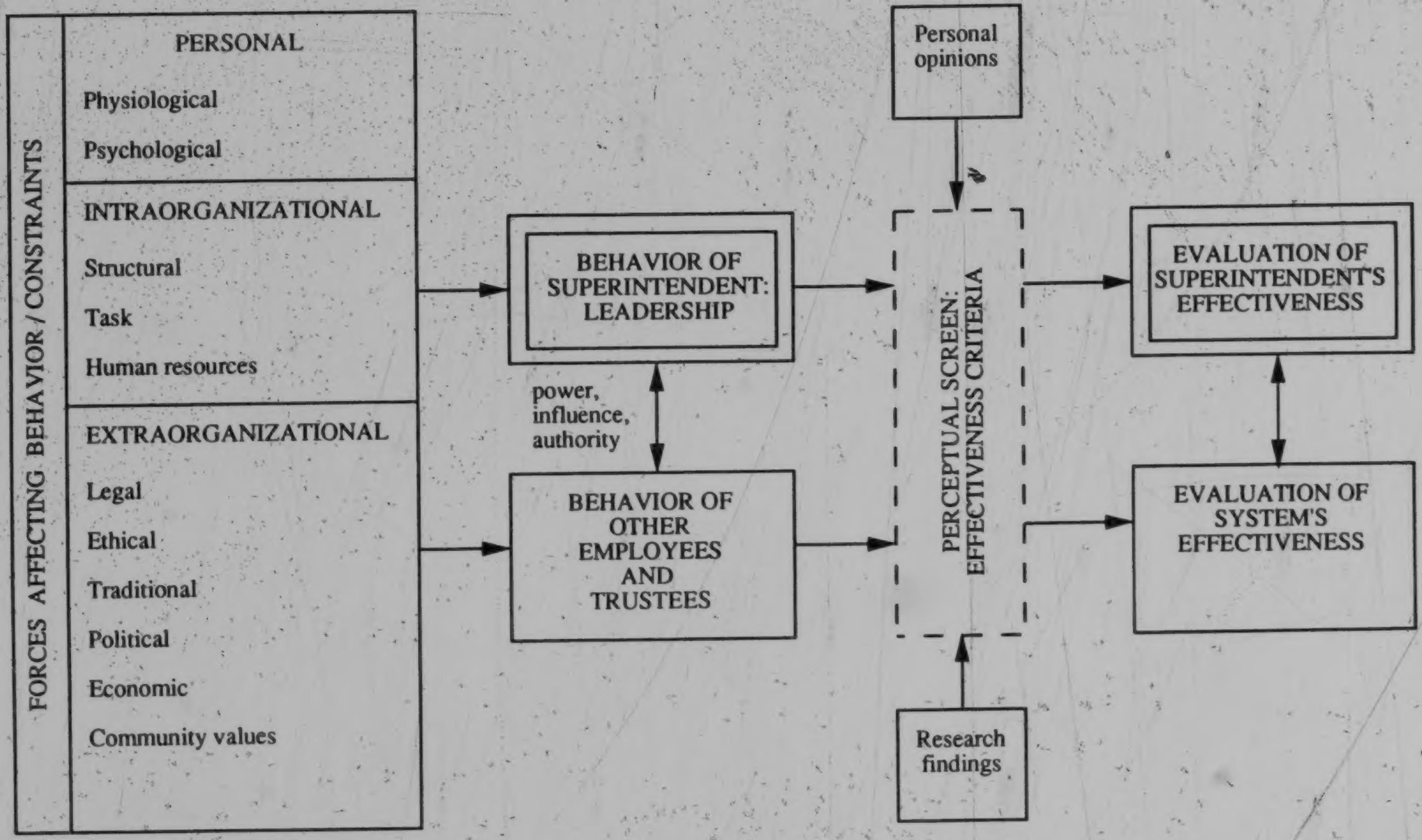
FORCES AFFECTING BEHAVIOR / CONSTRAINTS
PERSONAL
Physiological
Psychological
INTRAORGANIZATIONAL
Structural
Task
Human resources
EXTRAORGANIZATIONAL
Legal
Ethical
Traditional
Political
Economic
Community values
BEHAVIOR OF SUPERINTENDENT: LEADERSHIP
power, influence, authority
BEHAVIOR OF OTHER EMPLOYEES AND TRUSTEES
Personal opinions
PERCEPTUAL SCREEN: EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA
Research findings
EVALUATION OF SUPERINTENDENT'S EFFECTIVENESS
EVALUATION OF SYSTEM'S EFFECTIVENESS

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework for Evaluation of Superintendent's Effectiveness

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research design, methodological procedures used, and the research context form the content of this chapter. A detailed description of these matters is included: the sample selection process; methods of gaining approval to conduct the research; development and testing of the instrument; the collection, analysis, and reporting of data; the reliability, validity, and objectivity of the findings; justification for the methodological approach; orientation, values, and assumptions of the researcher; and the ethical considerations.

Research Design

The general design closely paralleled the research conducted with effective business leaders, effective superintendents, and effective school districts. (See for example, Aplin & Daresh, 1984; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; and Peters & Waterman, 1982.) The work was exploratory and descriptive, and intended to present hypotheses, rather than to test them. This is a crucial function of qualitative research which has been noted by researchers such as LeCompte and Goetz (1982) and Sandelowski (1986).

Bridges (1982) stated that "lamentably, the lion's share of the research on school administrators has little theoretical or practical relevance" (p. 17). Much of it he suggested is "raw empiricism" and of little interest to either scholars or practitioners. He posited that researchers should "identify management practices which have been used by school administrators to produce a particular outcome and to estimate the relative effectiveness of these practices in producing the desired results" (p. 29). Finally, studies describing "what is" provide a basis for speculating about "what ought to be" (Immegart, 1988; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985; Silver, 1983). If individual superintendents can examine their behavior relative to effective colleagues, then and perhaps only then will the individuals act to change.

To obtain information relative to the research questions, qualitative methodologies were used, although researchers such as Miles and Huberman (1984) stated that "few researchers are not blending these two [qualitative and quantitative] perspectives" (p. 20). This was perhaps true in 1984 but recently a number of researchers have examined the superintendency by using qualitative methodologies . (See for example, Allison , 1989; Aplin & Daresh, 1984; Armstrong, 1990; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Holloway 1990; Jackson & Crawford 1991; and Murphy & Hallinger, 1986.)

Bridges (1982) stated that there are at least four possibilities for gathering data:

1. Administering questionnaires;
2. Holding interviews;
3. Observing subjects directly; and
4. Examining traces of records of people and/or their activities. (p. 15)

Data were collected for this study from three major sources: (a) a review of the literature; (b) open-ended interviews with 13 selected superintendents; and (c) an examination of pertinent school system documents.

The perceptions of effective school superintendents constituted the major methodological focus for the study. The analyses of pertinent documents afforded the researcher the opportunity to explore board policies not covered in detail during the interview process. Coleman and LaRocque (1990) stated that "the greater the consistency in responses revealed by these comparisons, the more confident we [can] be in the inferences drawn about district norms and practices" (p. 248).

Methodology

Kerlinger (1973) remarked that, "The function of the methodology . . . section of the research report, of course, is to tell the reader what was done to solve the problem"

(p. 696). The methodology of this study was influenced by a review of the literature pertaining to organizational effectiveness, leadership, and the superintendency. Although much has been written about organizational and leader effectiveness, there is very little agreement on the approach or criteria to be used when judging it. Cameron and Whetton (1983) wrote that "no theories of . . . effectiveness per se are possible, the criteria for assessing it are both divergent and difficult to identify" (p. 20). This may be a "wicked problem" (Mitroff, 1983)--those which are so complex that administrators do not fully understand them, and if the researcher is not extremely careful a Type III error will be made, i.e., "solving the wrong formulation of a problem when instead [one] should have solved the right one" (Dunn, 1982, p. 133). Solving this type of problem therefore requires more vigor and perhaps more stubbornness on the part of the researcher. Halpin's (1966) words of nearly a quarter a century ago offer some comfort:

> The fact that a problem takes a long time to solve, and that it will demand the attention of many minds for several generations, is no justification for postponing the study. And, in times of emergency, it may prove in the long run that the problems we have postponed or ignored, rather than those we have failed to attack successfully, will return to plague us Our difficulties of the moment must always be dealt with somehow: but our permanent difficulties are difficulties of every moment. (p. 72)

Every person has within him some notion of the factors that contribute to effectiveness. These factors are determined by the beliefs and values of each individual and by the environment. With these many perceptions of effectiveness in mind, Cameron and Whetton (1983) suggested a need for researchers to delimit their studies and to clearly specify the focus; these cautions were heeded and noted in the section on Delimitations of Chapter 1.

Selection of the Sample

The purpose of the study--to obtain the perceptions of 13 of the most effective superintendents in the province of Alberta as to how they improved their school systems--necessitated identification of the superintendents. The type of methodology used--open-ended interview instrument and the analysis of pertinent documents; imposed restrictions on the size of the sample.

A panel of 14 judges--eight from Alberta Education (central and regional offices), three from the senior staff of the Alberta School Trustees' Association, and three from the senior staff of the Alberta Teachers' Association--were asked to participate in the selection of the superintendents. The senior staff of these educational agencies, because of their overall knowledge of the performance of superintendents in the province, were assumed to be in a position to judge which members of the whole group were most effective. Individual school systems would of course have intimate and detailed information of their own incumbent , but may have greater difficulty in making relative comparisons across the province. After agreeing to cooperate, these informed judges were presented a list of eligible superintendents along with the names of their corresponding school systems. The systems were categorized into sizes of large (>3,000 pupils), medium (1,000-3,000 pupils), and small (<1,000 pupils). The eligible sample sizes were as follows:

Large systems	19
Medium systems	29
Small systems	11
Total	59

To be considered for selection, superintendents had to be full time, not on leave, responsible for only one school system, and working in their current position for at least two years. Superintendents not meeting these criteria were not considered to be in a position to be judged effective by the panel. Judges were not provided any criteria upon which to judge the most effective superintendents. Had a list of criteria been provided, the responses may have been unduly biased towards superintendents who perform well on those criteria. Further, some important criteria may have been omitted from the list, thereby reflecting the biases of the researcher. The judges were encouraged to recommend participants on the impressions they created. They were then asked to select the most effective superintendents from the provided list. All judges after due consideration made their recommendations.

The responses of the judges were recorded on a grid constructed for the purpose, and were then cumulated to give the scores of individual superintendents. A total of 41 superintendents received recommendations from one or more judges. The 15 who received the highest cumulated recommendations of the judges were asked to participate in the study. The 15 received from 6 to 10 recommendations. After receiving all of the responses the decision was made to delete the four largest systems because they were so vastly different from the others and because anonymity could not be guaranteed, although some of these superintendents may have received adequate recommendations to participate in the study.

The mean student enrollment for the systems which employed the 13 selected superintendents was approximately 4,000. The mean number of teachers and schools in the systems were 230 and 12.3 respectively. The mean number of years of experience as superintendents of the participants in this study was 11.3. Actual information concerning the ranges of these variables is not included in order to ensure anonymity. The composition of the systems varied widely in student enrollment, number of schools, and the number of teachers. Such variations reflect proportional variations in the complexity of organizational structures and other related factors associated with the work environments of superintendents. The two smallest systems did not engage the services of assistant superintendents, while larger systems employed a number of assistant superintendents.

The 15 superintendents who received the highest scores were contacted and asked for their cooperation and participation in the research project. The claim was not made that these were the only effective superintendents in the province. The claim was made, however, that the 15 selected were the most effective as perceived by the panel of judges. Only 13 of the 15 superintendents actually participated in the study, because two consented to be involved in the pilot study. Their exclusion provided appropriate distributions across size and type of system. See Table 3.1. All of the identified superintendents agreed to participate.

Male and female superintendents were included in the population, although only masculine gender nomenclature is used throughout this thesis to preserve anonymity. Most had had considerable central office administrative experience with their present system before assuming the superintendents' position. Only two had served as chief executive officers with other jurisdictions before being hired to their present position. This is consistent with the findings of two Ontario studies conducted by McLeod (1984) and Allison (1989) who concluded that lateral mobility among chief executive officers (CEO) was uncommon. Most of the CEOs were similar in experience to those in Allison's study, i.e., they were "well experienced and seasoned educational administrators who had likely attained their professional apogee" (Allison, 1989, p. 295).

Researchers have used similar methods and techniques as were used in this study to identify the most effective organizations and the most effective leaders within a select group. In 1977 a "prestigious panel of jurors" (Hoyle, 1988, p. 6) identified 80 "great superintendents" for The Executive Educator and The American School Board Journal. The Executive Educator in 1984 selected its 100 top executive educators by inviting "nominations from every major national association representing school management or governance in the U.S. and Canada" (Downey, 1984, p. 15). Peters and Waterman (1982) asked an "informed group of observers from the business scene--businessmen, consultants, members of the business press, and business academics" (p. 19) to identify innovative and excellent companies. These companies were categorized into high-technology, consumer-goods, general industrial goods, service, project management, and resource-based companies to ensure representation from the various industry segments. From the recommended list, 62 companies were chosen for study.

Aplin and Daresh (1984) selected the lone "superb educational leader" for their study by accepting nominations from a "panel of 20 people representing the state education agency, state wide administrator and teacher organizations, the state school board associations, and departments of educational administration at universities across the state" (p. 212). The panel members were asked to list the three superintendents who best represented the notion of educational leader at the district level. A telephone interview was arranged where "one superintendent clearly emerged as the most appropriate example of a district administrator who served as an educational leader" (p. 212).

Scalafani and Collier, as reported in Hoyle (1988), conducted a very large study of superintendents in the United States at The University of Texas at Austin. Of the sample of 1957 superintendents, 157 of these were identified as effective by "professional organizations, university departments of educational administration, and state departments of education in each of the 50 states" (p. 2). This sample was chosen to include districts of different sizes and types of locations.

Researchers have used a variety of methods to identify effective agencies. Some have relied on statistical data (Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Pajak &Glickman,1989; and many others) from standardized tests, while others have used "softer" measures such as judgments and perceptions of informed and respected individuals. Interestingly, neither of the studies reviewed used both "hard" and "soft" data in their identification process. Reliance upon softer type data was deemed appropriate and realistic for identifying the subjects for this study.

Table 3.1

Numbers of Superintendents by Type of System—Populations and Samples

Type of employing system	Numbers of superintendents			
	Total	Total eligible[a]	Preliminary sample[b]	Final sample
Counties	30	19	5	5
Public school districts	26	13	6	4
School divisions	32	18	2	2
Separate school districts	27	9	2	2
Total	115	59	15	13

Notes. [a] The "total eligible" consisted of those superintendents who were full-time, were not on leave, were responsible for only one school system, and had been in their current position for at least two years.

[b] Two superintendents from the 15 identified as the most organizationally effective participated in the last pilot-test, thereby reducing the final sample to 13.

Development and Pilot-testing of the Instrument

An open-ended interview instrument derived from content grounded in the literature was used to focus on the research objectives. The instrument consisted of all open-ended questions. These types of questions "supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers, but a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 483). In defence of open-ended questions, Kerlinger stated that

> they are flexible; they have possibilities of depth; they enable the interviewer to clear up misunderstanding (through probing); they enable the interviewer to ascertain a respondent's lack of knowledge, to detect ambiguity, to encourage cooperation and achieve rapport, and to make better estimates of respondents' true intentions, beliefs, and attitudes. (p. 484)

The preliminary instrument was first presented to two practicing superintendents and two professors of educational administration for initial feedback. As a result of this feedback adjustments were made. Following this, the adjusted instrument was formally pilot-tested with two of the superintendents identified by the experts. These individuals were not included in the study. Interviews were then conducted using a preliminary schedule. The two members of the pilot responded to all questions as if they were in the main study. In addition, both superintendents presented pertinent documents for analysis.

Open-ended questions afforded the two members of the pilot the opportunity to express perceptions which may be important to Alberta school systems, which may have been neglected in the literature, or which may have been omitted in the preliminary design of the survey instrument. These discussions were intended to reveal new variables which superintendents viewed as particularly significant, since many of the criteria and variables under examination in the effectiveness domain have been drawn from the literature but have not been thoroughly tested for meaningfulness and comprehensiveness in the Canadian school system context. Hence, these preliminary interviews offered an opportunity for clarifying, refining, and adapting the interview instrument prior to administering it to the study sample.

At the end of the interview the two superintendents were invited to respond to any other relevant matters which had not been addressed in the interview. Both respondents felt that the instrument was comprehensive and gave them the opportunity to present their views on effectiveness. This step was taken in accordance with the advice of Kerlinger (1973) that "questions must be pretested and revised to eliminate ambiguities and inadequate wording" (p. 480). The superintendents were debriefed to ascertain the practicality, relevance, usefulness, accuracy, and clarity of the instrument. Their comments were used to modify the instrument.

Data Collection

The major method of data collection was the interview and the major source of data was school superintendents. Thirteen superintendents were interviewed between October 11 and November 6, 1990. Each superintendent was deemed to be a key informant (LeCompte & Goetz, 1980).

Interviewees were written well in advance of the interview and asked to participate in the study. All superintendents invited agreed to participate. Brief telephone conversations were held with the subjects during the scheduling of the interviews. These conversations provided the researcher the opportunity to develop rapport and a climate of trust. The interviews were relaxed and positive. Eleven interviews were conducted at district offices.

A number of questions on the instrument consisted of two parts (see Appendix A). On the first part, respondents were asked to identify some aspect of the topic being examined. The second part involved subjects in a discussion of how the identified aspect was operationalized or achieved in their school systems. The researcher kept notes during each interview to keep track of the points made by the interviewee and if necessary to remind respondents of these points. All questions were asked in the same sequence and respondents were encouraged to take whatever time was necessary to develop a complete answer. The interviewer made few comments during the interviews except to ask for clarification, elaboration, or give specific examples wherever necessary. If a respondent's answer was short, the interviewer probed for further information to give the respondents every opportunity to recall and describe matters related to the question.

All respondents gave their undivided attention to the interview; telephone calls and other appointments were put on hold, and coffee breaks were rare. Superintendents seemed to have little difficulty focusing on the topic until all questions were answered. Some expressed their views on how "time had flown." All interviews were completed in one session.

Immediately after each interview, time was spent reviewing notes, making clarifications, and listening to the tapes while the information was still "fresh" in the researcher's mind. In addition to the interview, superintendents provided the following documents: system mission and goal statements; superintendent, central office personnel, principal, and teacher evaluation policies; annual board reports for the previous year; system newsletters from the previous year; and the system organizational charts.

The audio-taped interview consisted of 16 relatively broad and open-ended questions, ranging from 75 to 135 minutes to complete. The average time spent in interviews was 90 minutes. Prior to the interview, respondents were reminded of the purpose of the study, and demographic data were collected.

As noted, initial interviews were held between October 11 and November 6, 1990. Follow-up interviews were conducted between April 17 and April 24, 1991; four were held face-to-face, while 9 were held by telephone. Telephone interviews were very focused and seemed to be more restricted to the topics than the face-to-face. The interviews averaged 33 minutes and ranged from 15 to 55 minutes each. Prior to these interviews superintendents were presented some of the findings from the initial interviews along with six questions identified by the researcher as requiring more elaboration. These interviews were very focused. (See Appendix E.) Notes were kept during the interviews, and detailed recordings were made immediately after while the information was still "fresh."

Analysis and Reporting of Data

Data were transcribed verbatim from tape to hard copy by an independent transcriber. The transcripts were stored on computer disks for easy manipulation. Information pertaining to each interview was stored in a single file. Numerous readings and repeated listening to tapes were undertaken to identify the major themes and sub-themes which were reported for each question. Another researcher had access to all tapes and was given hard copies of all transcriptions prior to any analyses. The documents provided by the superintendents were examined to obtain a better understanding of each school system and to provide information additional to that provided during the interviews. However, no analysis of the documents is provided in this thesis.

A grid was constructed to help focus the data. The columns of the grid were headed by the questions and sub-questions in the sequence in which they appeared on the interview schedule; the respective superintendents formed the row heading. Each cell contained the essence of an individual superintendent's response to a question or sub-question. A profile of all the responses of a superintendent could be examined by looking along a row, while the responses of all superintendents on a particular question could be scanned by reading down a column. A compact summary of all data could be gained by examining the grid. This enabled the researcher to get a "birds-eye" view of all data quickly.

Miles and Huberman (1984) presented a variety of methods for reducing and displaying data. Three of the methods that they suggested--summary sheets, memoing, and coding--were used extensively in summarizing this data. The responses of all superintendents on a question or sub-question were placed in an individual file and printed. As noted by Allison (1989) the comments of respondents "were noted, compared, counted, grouped, and regrouped" (p. 295). During transcript analysis the researcher "sought to identify commonalties, contrasts, and conceptual themes in the way the [superintendents] described and discussed their work and, where possible, to relate these to the organizational size of school systems" (Allison, 1989, p. 296). The individual responses were coded as presented in the tables. There was a consensus on the categories with the same researcher who was issued hard copies of the raw data. The richness of responses to open-ended questions provided data on a number of themes and facilitated the development of a number of typologies of superintendent behavior.

Justification for the Selected Methodological Approach

This study was part of a larger research project. In other parts of the project, researchers examined the interview transcripts from a more interpretive perspective and investigated additional variables including the job satisfaction of superintendents.

The methodology used in this study can best be described as an open-ended interview approach, which involved counting the frequencies with which particular responses were obtained. In reporting the data, the rich responses of the respondents were frequently used to ensure that the reporting coincided as accurately as possible with what was actually said. The task was to express the responses of the 13 superintendents accurately and precisely, attending to the range of responses and also formulating wherever generalizations could be made. Data were reported with a view to ensuring internal validity and conceptual certainty and at the same time maintaining authenticity and meaning.

Although the study was conducted mainly from a qualitative perspective, in reporting the data numbers were used to denote frequencies and percentages in order to reduce the volume of information and to focus responses. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used. In order to maintain the highest degree of reliability and validity possible and to fulfill the purposes of the study, both paradigms were used.

In addition, the advice of Miles and Huberman (1984) to "keep the numbers , and the words used to devise the numbers, together in your ensuing analysis" (p. 21) was strictly adhered to. The data therefore were not stripped from the context from which they were obtained.

A similar type of methodology was used by other researchers in examining the superintendency. (See for example, Aplin & Daresh, 1984; Coleman & LaRocque, 1989; Crowson & Morris, 1990; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Pajak & Glickman, 1989.) The following components were seen as particularly desirable:

1. Pilot interviews gave the researcher a sense of how the field work for the study would proceed. Adjustments in approaches and the instrument were accommodated at this stage to facilitate a rewarding and useful study.

2. The administration of the instrument to effective superintendents in Alberta was expected to produce a range of perceptions which are indicative of the practices and procedures necessary to enhance superintendent and district effectiveness. It was also expected to give some indication of "what ought to be done."

3. Several writers, such as Griffiths (1983), Morgan (1984), Greenfield (1986), Culbertson (1988), and Immegart (1988), have argued for an interpretative mode of inquiry. Greenfield was especially adamant in his condemnation of the positivistic mode of research advocated by Herbert Simon. He argued that "this mode yields 'hard' but often impotent, irrelevant or misleading data" (p. 61), and stated that "science starts from a standpoint of things as they are, and then asks why they are so; it does not question whether that which is ought to be" (p. 66). He further argued that educational organizations are not "objective" phenomena regulated by general laws; rather, they are mental constructs that reflect the perceptions and interpretations of their members. Culbertson (1988) paraphrased Greenfield's position in this way: "students of organizations should turn their back, then, upon logical positivistic science and adapt interpretive modes of inquiry" (p. 3).

At a conference in Toronto on June 1-2, 1988, Blumberg noted that for the past three decades, research has been largely unproductive, and perhaps irrelevant to the work of school administrators. He proposed that a more useful model of inquiry would be to focus on individual administrators and their practice and to encourage administrators to study their own or a colleague's practice with the aim of improving it. Similarly, Sergiovanni (1987) suggested that the approach to a study of leadership be as follows:

> The old view of leadership which emphasized styles and behaviors and the development of highly structured management systems remains important. But what is now becoming apparent is that what leaders stand for and believe in and their ability to communicate these values and ideals to others in a fashion which provides both meaning and significance to others is more important than how they behave. (p. 2)

The interview method of data collection was chosen with an understanding of its inherent strengths and weaknesses. For logistical reasons the number of subjects was limited to 13. Interviewing is primarily a qualitative data collection strategy. Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Guba and Lincoln (1981), Locke, Spiriduso and Silverman (1987), Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch and Cook (1964), and others have supported the use of interviews as a reliable and effective means of data collection. Kerlinger (1973) noted the appropriateness of the interview "when it is difficult to get information with other methods, when it is necessary to probe or go deep, [and] when a new area is being explored" (p. 488). This research was naturalistic in the sense that the researcher entered the world of the participants as it existed to collect data without any deliberate attempt to alter the setting.

The interview method of data collection has been defended on the following grounds by a number of writers:

1. The interview yields a good sample of the population because most people are willing and able to cooperate in a study when all they have to do is sit and talk.

2. The interview provides great flexibility; if a subject misinterprets a question or responds in an unclear manner, the interviewer may rephrase the question or ask further questions so that the subject may clarify the response.

3. The interview offers the researcher the opportunity to appraise the validity of reports. The researcher is in a position to observe not only what the respondent says but how it is said. If deemed appropriate the interviewer can follow up contradictory statements or directly challenge the subject's report in order to verify the consistency of answers.

4. The interview has been cited by Selltiz et al. (1964) as an "appropriate technique for revealing information about complex, emotionally laden subjects, or for probing the sentiments that may underlie an expressed opinion" (p. 242).

5. The interviewer may vary the "social atmosphere" by pointing out objections to the position of the person being interviewed and observe how the latter responds.

However, the reliance on self-reporting by superintendents could lead to problems concerning the validity of data. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) have pointed out that "information gathered is a function of the person who gives it" (p. 46), or as others have noted "believing is seeing." Document analysis was therefore used to provide additional information relevant to items in the interview schedule.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of assessments. Will repeated assessments of the phenomena yield similar or the same results? Sandelowski (1986) stated that,"inherent in the [notion] of reliability is repeatability" (p. 32). Similarly, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stated that "reliability refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated" (p. 35). Castetter and Heisler (1980) noted that reliability is related to the "accuracy, [the] trustworthiness of data produced" (p. 205). That is, will researchers using similar methods and instruments obtain the same or similar results in future studies? Because social phenomena cannot be reconstructed precisely, even exact replication of research methods may fail to produce identical results. Human behavior is never static, therefore "no study can be exactly replicated, regardless of methods and designs employed" (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 35). Ensuring reliability is a matter of degree rather than an absolute in inquiry in the social sciences. Coding of the superintendents' responses can be considered to be highly reliable because the two researchers who were involved reached consensus when any difficulties were experienced. Whether the superintendents would answer the same questions differently at another time is open to conjecture. Use of follow-up interviews allowed superintendents to reflect upon their earlier positions. In general, a high degree of consistency was noted between responses of individual superintendents in the two interviews.

Validity

Reliability requires consistency only, but validity requires both accuracy and consistency. Reliability is viewed as a necessary precondition for validity. Validity refers to how truthful, genuine, and authentic the data are in representing what they are intended to assess. In the naturalistic mode, internal validity is often equated with credibility, while external validity is equated with the generalizability of the data. Was accurate information obtained about how the most effective superintendents think and act? The expert judges were assumed to have selected a group of superintendents who were considered to be highly effective, also superintendents were assumed to be truthful in what they said and that their responses were appropriately coded.

Internal Validity

The interview offers an excellent opportunity to appraise the credibility of reports. In this study, internal validity should have been very high. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stated that "validity may be a major strength" (p. 43) of this type of research. These same authors stated that "informant interviewing . . . is phrased more closely to the empirical categories of participants and is formed less abstractly than instruments used in other research designs" (p. 43). The interview incorporates a process of researcher's self-monitoring of reflection and comparison that exposes all phases of the research activity to continual questioning and reevaluation.

Researchers are expected to achieve the highest degree of internal validity possible. LeCompte and Goetz (1980) noted that researchers have used any or all of the following five strategies to achieve it: low-influence descriptors; multiple-researchers; participant-researchers, peer-examination, and mechanically recorded data, to increase internal validity. Low-influence descriptors are to be phrased in terms, as concrete and as precise as possible, and interpretation may be added or deleted as desired, but a record of who said what under what circumstances should be recorded accurately. The coding of interview data was checked by another researcher. Before a coding category was finally selected, the two coders reached consensus. In the pilot study, two researchers jointly participated in one of the interviews. Peer-examination techniques were not realistic for this study. All interviews were tape recorded. Data were then transcribed verbatim to hard copy and stored on computer disks for easy manipulation.

External Validity

According to Campbell and Stanley (1963), external validity is concerned with this question: "To what populations, settings, treatment variables, and measurement variables can this effect be generalized" (p. 5)? LeCompte and Goetz (1982) noted that comparability and translatability are related to external validity. Recognizing this, the researcher is responsible to conceptualize the typicality of the phenomena. In the proposed study, effective school superintendents were identified by constituent agencies, most of which exist in all provinces of Canada and states of the United States. Because similar administrative educational structures exist throughout North America, the major themes of this study should have some relevance for increasing organizational and superintendent effectiveness in other settings.

The phenomena examined were complex and each school system's situation was unique. However, the research should have substantial external validity. Ethnographers have suggested that external validity may be enhanced by recognizing and handling five major aspects: researcher status position, informant choices, social situations and conditions, analytic constructs and premises, and methods of data collection and analysis.

"Researcher status position" refers to the extent to which the researcher is a member of the constituent group studied and what positions the constituents hold. This presents both a positive and a negative scenario as it relates to external validity for this particular study. The researcher had considerable experience in the job situation which enabled him "to probe deeply and to analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena" (Cohen & Manion, 1980, p. 99) extant in the circumstances under study. On the other hand, LeCompte and Goetz (1982) suggested that "other researchers will fail to obtain comparable findings unless they develop corresponding social positions" (p. 37). The other negative view is that the findings may be interpreted from the relatively narrow perspective of the school superintendent.

Creating categories for coding is the first step in developing analytic constructs and premises. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stated that "it is vital to the process of organizing that the naturally occurring streams of behavior [be separated] into manageable units" (p. 39). Units for analysis should be clearly identified. Ideally, methods of data collection and analysis should be so detailed and clearly presented that other researchers can use the original reports as an operating manual to replicate the study.

Assurance of reliability and validity are viewed, not as an event but rather, as a process to be continually attended to during the study to the maximum degree possible.

Objectivity

Problems of objectivity including bias, conscious and unconscious prejudices, incompetence, gullibility, and corruptibility in research data collection have been noted in the literature. Some writers maintain that organizational effectiveness research is particularly susceptible to these problems because respondents may fake or, as Lawler, Nadler, and Camman (1980) suggested, "deliberately distort" (p. 323) data for personal reasons to exaggerate the performance of themselves or "their" organization.

To ensure objectivity in these type of studies, Cameron and Whetten (1983) outlined seven "guidelines for assessing organizational effectiveness" (p. 269) as follows:

1. The perspective from which effectiveness is being judged.
2. The domain of activity on which the judgment is focused.
3. The levels of analysis being used.
4. The purpose for judging effectiveness.
5. The time frame being employed.
6. The type of data being used for judgments of effectiveness.
7. The referents against which effectiveness is being judged.

It is extremely difficult if not impossible in social science research, regardless of the mode of inquiry, to guarantee exceptionally high degrees of reliability, validity, or objectivity. Researchers must understand and guard against factors which affect these concepts and eliminate researcher biases as much as possible.

Researcher Orientation, Values, and Assumptions

In addressing the question of researcher orientation, Sandelowski (1986) stated that "any study and its findings are at least as much a reflection of the investigator as the phenomenon studied" (p. 34). Researchers approach their projects with a personal frame of reference that influences the instrument construction, the collection and analysis of data, and the presentation of findings. In outlining the orientation for this study, the researcher was conscious that the adoption and acknowledgement of this stance was in no way intended to discredit other methods of inquiry. On the contrary, the researcher agrees with Kaplan's (1964) statement that, "When one doctrine, method, or technique becomes to be regarded as the sole repository of truth, or the one avenue of truth, for my part I have no doubt that it is the truth which suffers" (pp. 275-276). The researcher is well aware that there are other reputable orientations to the study of effectiveness than the line of inquiry pursued in this project. Myrdal (1978) expressed this notion as follows:

> Valuations are always with us. Disinterested research there has never been and can never be. Prior to answers there must be questions. There can be no view except from a viewpoint. In the questions raised and the viewpoints chosen valuations are implied. Our valuations determine our approaches to a problem, the definition of our concepts, the choice of models, the selection of our observations, the presentation of our conclusions--in fact the whole pursuit of a study from beginning to end. If we remain unaware of the valuational basis to our research, this implies we proceed to reason with one premise missing, which implies an indeterminateness that opens the door for biases. (pp. 778-779)

This study reflects the researcher's assumption of the powerful and subtle influences of the environment on the formation of perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Cameron (1984) expressed the view that effectiveness ranges along a continuum from ineffectiveness to effectiveness. The concept is not an absolute. The removal of constraints enables effectiveness to be approached in an organizational setting. The researcher subscribes to this view. School systems are open systems. There is a continuous interaction between the system and its environment. Griffiths (1988) realized the need to acknowledged contextual factors such as "the environment or society and the organizational setting, as well as scientists who bring biases and predispositions to their study" (p. 37). Gilliland and Gilliland (1978) stated that systems theory "is a philosophy or conceptual framework which explains empirical relationships" (p. 1). Morgan (1986) noted that, "the organization must achieve an appropriate relation with the environment if it is to survive" (p. 45). Katz and Kahn (1966) echoed much the same sentiments when they stated "social systems are open systems in that the input of energies and the conversion of output into further energetic input consists of transactions between the organization and its environment" (pp. 16-17).

The researcher's view of system effectiveness is generally in accordance with the value premise identified by Holmes (1986), which advocates that the basic intent of education is "the development of character and of intellect" (p. 84). The basic model then is a structure that imports energy, resources, and personnel from the environment, transforms these inputs into desirable outputs, and again feeds them back into the environment. This process promotes moderate changes and developments, but the organization in the final analysis perpetuates itself.

Ethical Considerations

Involvement of superintendents in this study was voluntary. Participants were advised that they could withdraw at any time. No physical or mental harm resulted, and the interests and protection of research subjects were safeguarded at all times. All respondents remained anonymous except to two researchers. Opinions and information provided were treated confidentially. The interviews on the audio tapes were obliterated at the conclusion of the study. The researcher considers himself sufficiently knowledgeable about relevant literature, procedures, risks, and possible uses to which the results of this study may be used to protect the participants. In accordance with the University of Alberta requirements, the research proposal was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Administration.

Chapter Summary

Thirteen of the most effective superintendents in the province of Alberta were chosen by accumulating the recommendations of officials from Alberta Education, The Alberta School Trustees' Association, and The Alberta Teachers' Association. These agencies were provided a list of eligible candidates, i.e., those who had two or more years experience in the superintendency, were currently not on leave, administered just one district, and were full-time superintendents. To obtain data related to the research question --"how do effective superintendents administer their school systems?"--pertinent literature was reviewed, 13 of the most organizationally effective superintendents in the province of Alberta were interviewed, and relevant documents were analyzed from these systems. Data collected from these interviews were transcribed verbatim by an independent transcriber, copied on computer disks, content-analyzed, and reported herein in detail. The review of the literature, the pilot study, and the document analysis helped to establish the validity of the findings.

Chapter 4

PRIORITIES OF SUPERINTENDENTS

This chapter presents the findings related to Question 1 of the interview schedule:

1. (a) What are your three top priorities in your role as superintendent?
   (b) What are some specific examples of activities that you perform to achieve these priorities?

The superintendents' responses were coded under three major foci which emerged from the data: system, personnel, and instructional. Although the major foci are presented as separate and distinct, some overlapping naturally occurs. The priorities classified under each major focus along with their frequencies are shown in Table 4.1. For example, "planning," which was stated as the first priority of three superintendents and the third priority of one superintendent, was placed under the system focus.

System Priorities

Table 4.2 presents the methods by which planning and other system priorities were achieved and of the frequencies with which these methods were used.

Planning

Planning was identified as the first priority of 31% of respondents and the third priority of 23%. One superintendent viewed planning as the "determination of priorities and vision." Another saw strategic planning as looking at "the emerging issues . . . and trying to set some short and longer term strategies to cope with these issues in a changing and volatile environment." One defended the need for a plan in the following way:

> We have developed over the years a strategic overall plan which give us our set directions and priorities for the next five years. We've also developed a strategic financial plan. We also have a five year curriculum implementation plan so staff know exactly when . . . we're going to implement a program and what we're going to do in terms of follow-up.

Table 4.1

Frequency of Mention of Three Highest Priorities of Superintendents

Priority	Priority frequency			Total	Weighted total[b]
	1	2	3		
SYSTEM					
Planning	3[a]		1[a]	4	10
Developing mission statement	2			2	6
Fulfilling the role of chief executive officer	1			1	3
Identifying needs	1			1	3
Acquiring financial resources		1		1	2
Providing leadership		1		1	2
Providing resources		1		1	2
Setting goals		1		1	2
Ensuring smooth operation			1	1	1
Total	7	4	2	13	31
PERSONNEL					
Communicating effectively		2	1	3	5
Maintaining good relationships	1		2	3	5
Setting roles	1			1	3
Developing leadership of administrators		1		1	2
Improving competence of teachers		1		1	2
Involving staff in implementing system plan		1		1	2
Rotating administrators		1		1	2
Selecting administrative staff		1		1	2
Selecting and maintaining high-quality staff		1		1	2
Being available			1	1	1
Building agreements			1	1	1
Evaluating principals			1	1	1
Involving stakeholders in decision making			1	1	1
Involving teachers in decision making			1	1	1
Providing support to teachers			1	1	1
Working together			1	1	1
Total	2	8	10	20	32
INSTRUCTIONAL					
Providing appropriate programs	3			3	9
Focusing on teaching and learning	1			1	3
Enhancing student growth		1		1	2
Ensuring student success			1	1	1
Total	4	1	1	6	15
Grand Total	**13**	**13**	**13**	**39**	**78**

Notes. [a] "Planning" was a first priority of three superintendents and a third priority of one.
[b] The weighted total = (3 x priority 1) + (2 x priority 2) + (1 x priority 1).

Table 4.2

Methods of Achieving System Priorities of Superintendents

Planning--"bottom-up"

Engage each school and each department in the development of educational plans.
Arrange for discussions with teachers and principals on professional and personal plans.
Encourage principals to develop specific growth objectives for their schools.
Present the growth objectives of each school to the administrative council.
Arrange for a review of these plans between administrative council and principals.
Insist upon the development of growth objectives by assistant superintendents for the whole system.
Engage whole system, i.e., community and staff.
Review the district plan with trustees in closed session.
Present the district plan to the board for formal approval in open meeting.
Submit a budget to Alberta Education for the coming year.
Monitor progress to ensure implementation.

Planning--"top-down"

Examine the futurist literature.
Examine emergent issues by environmental scanning.
Examine trends.
Hold a retreat with the board (mentioned by three superintendents).
Assess where we are, where we want to be, and how to get there.
Establish 3-year priorities.
Engage the whole system, i.e., community and staff in developing plans at all levels.

Developing mission statement

Examine the future with a view to developing a mission statement.
Involve all stakeholders in the process.
Work toward a consensus.
Promote this statement throughout the system.
Provide in-service education for all staff new to the system.
Review all existing policies in light of the mission statement.
Update the policy manual.
Inform parents.
Ensure an ongoing review process.
Meet regularly with the board to plan for future challenges.
Develop the mission statement over three years.
Distribute a visioning document.
Spend time with community and staff creating ownership of the statement.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Methods of Achieving System Priorities of Superintendents

Fulfill the role of CEO

Consider input of individual trustees.
Consult all staff, but especially senior staff.
Ensure there is good information for trustees to make decisions.
Gain approval of the board before proceeding.
Present recommendations to the board.

Identifying needs

Be perceptive.
Talk to principals and teachers.

Acquiring financial resources

Hold regular discussions with Alberta Education.
Ensure all grant applications are accurately completed and on time.
Clearly show schools where we get our money so they know the things that matter.

Providing leadership

Be innovative and expose staff to new ideas.
Challenge people to look ahead and be optimistic rather than to look back and complain.
Deal with the board on inspirational general topics.
Encourage people to think positively.
Engage futurist to speak to the public and encourage principals to listen.
Engage the board in retreats.
Enjoy putting together ideas and talking to people.
Ensure the board weighs the consequences of its decisions.
Focus people on the future.
Focus the board on educational priorities.
Identify teachers who are excited about something, then give them freedom and encouragement to pursue it.
Provide in-service activities for the board on strategic planning.
Realize that adding more money doesn't necessarily improve anything.
Spend time with principals on a monthly basis.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Methods of Achieving System Priorities of Superintendents

Providing resources

- Maintain a close relationship with Alberta Education officials.
- Keep up to date on research findings.
- Encourage teachers to express their instructional needs.
- Try to match the needs of teachers with a solution.
- Prioritize where needs are greater than supply.

Setting goals

- Examine policies and goals, and then objectives will emerge.
- Work primarily with central office staff.
- Work with the board.

Ensuring smooth operation

- Ascertain how the district is reacting to these policies.
- Avoid being directive.
- Be accessible.
- Deal effectively with conflict.
- Deal with issues on a timely basis.
- Deal with others openly, fairly, and honestly.
- Delegate, and then expect people to do their jobs.
- Develop appropriate organizational structures.
- Establish a solid set of policies.
- Establish the right mood in the district.
- Give clear job descriptions.
- Hire people who are effective.
- Make decisions with due consideration and with a degree of finality.
- Practice the consultative approach.
- Set the environment so teachers can work effectively.
- Set up a good communication process.
- Value and practice hard work.

Notes. All of the above-listed methods were mentioned once except "Hold a retreat with the board." All methods of achieving the priority are arranged in alphabetical order except for "Planning" and "Developing mission statement" in which the methods are arranged in chronological order.

Planning was considered to be a process with two parts: (a) "giving direction to the system" and (b) developing ways and means of following that direction to achieve organizational goals.

Each of the four superintendents who identified planning as a priority presented a different process for the development of that plan. However, all reported that planning was a complex process involving many individuals and groups. One respondent "engaged the whole system to think about setting priorities at a system level for the next school year," while another stated that, "All levels of the system from the superintendent to the teachers are expected to develop plans for the coming year." One superintendent emphasized that, "system priorities are arrived at through a trust from the community, from the business world, from our employees and so on." Another noted that, "teachers sit down with their principals and talk about their personal and professional development." Principals were then expected to develop "growth objectives" and ways and means of accomplishing them. These were then presented to the central office administrative staff for analysis. After receiving plans from all schools, which served as a basis for the overall system plan, the central office staff presented the system plan to the board for formal approval.

Three superintendents stated that after receiving feedback from the public they engaged the board in a retreat. One respondent described a retreat as follows:

> we go out of the system and spend some time looking at our data, we speak to emerging issues, [examine] some trends that are before us, we take some literature that talks about the 21st century schools . . . and try to do an assessment of where we are, where we want to be and how we might get there.

Following these retreats, boards arrived at their "vision" for the future. This vision was conveyed to the employees, after which the process of implementation began at each school and department level." Individual schools and departments were expected to present budgets, develop educational plans, and identify priorities. These priorities were to fall within the parameters of the board's philosophy and policies. The schools' and departments' plans were examined by the board prior to the submission of a budget to Alberta Education.

Systems in this study used two fundamentally different methods in the development of their plans--"top-down" and "bottom-up." In the "top-down" method the board determined the general directions. The staff were then expected to develop performance objectives to operationalize these broad general directions within the system. While trustees decided on mission statements, guiding philosophies, and major priorities, the staff were expected to systematically translate these into manageable performance objectives. The superintendent was responsible for ensuring "that every subdivision and every individual understood how their activities contributed to the big picture." Detailed plans for each school and department were then presented to the board for final approval. In the "bottom up" method the staff were first engaged in the development of "system growth objectives" which were then presented to the board for formal approval. The general priorities emanated from these specific objectives. Deductive reasoning was used in the first method, while the other applied an inductive approach. In either case, boards assembled in retreats "away form the public eye to soberly reflect, to examine data, and to brainstorm" before deciding on their general directions.

Further analysis showed that the four superintendents who stated that planning was a priority were all employed in "large" school systems, i.e., those with more than 3,000 students. During the follow-up interviews superintendents were invited to react to this finding. They conjectured that superintendents in larger school systems would see planning as a priority because more projects and activities were taking place in large systems; trustees in larger system may be more interested in long range planning; the superintendent had time to plan in larger systems, while in smaller systems superintendents spent most of their time reacting to immediate problems; large systems had departments and assistant superintendents to attend to more menial tasks; superintendents employed in large systems maybe more visionary; and in larger systems planning is reserved for the superintendent's office which appeared to give it more prominence. Two superintendents were "surprised that planning was not a priority of all." One commented that, "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

In summary, planning, or an aspect of planning was the most frequently mentioned priority of superintendents. Superintendents recommended straight forward planning processes to their boards, but nevertheless ensured that all stakeholders were given the opportunity to become involved. Even when school systems had their own planning departments they engaged constituent groups to assist in the planning activities. Most boards did not have the necessary financing to engage separate planning departments so extensive involvement of constituent groups was necessary.

Developing a Mission Statement

Developing a mission statement was a priority of one superintendent because it was "the springboard for any organization." He expressed the opinion that it was a general statement or guiding principle from which all board policy flowed. Policies, goals, and objectives were developed to support and to achieve the mission of the organization.

This school system developed a "child-centered" mission statement by involving all district staff and trustees. The superintendent and staff were then assigned the responsibility of "making people aware that this statement is what this school district is all about."

The district launched several major awareness initiatives in order to ensure that the mission statement became a reality and was indeed followed. Copies were given to all staff. Every year new staff members were made fully aware of its contents and implications. Parents were informed that it existed and their support for it was solicited. All current system policies were reviewed in light of the mission statement. The superintendent ensured that teachers were aware of their responsibilities with respect to the implementation of these policies.

The mission statement was considered fluid and subject to change in order to reflect societies needs. The board and superintendent were continually looking to the future. This superintendent stated,

> I guess I do a fair bit of star gazing, crystal ball gazing, and looking at doing some strategic planning, trying to predict what it is we're going to be faced with in the next little while in this community.

Creating a shared vision, deemed to be very similar to "developing a mission statement," was the first priority of one superintendent. He proposed that,

> This vision should reflect how we relate to people, what type of expectations we have with respect to students, and how we might achieve our potential. It should reflect what we ought to become, or what we might become.

In this school system, visioning was achieved by these steps: (a) over a three-year period a mission statement was developed, (b) a vision document was distributed within the school system, (c) the superintendent spent time with the staff and the community talking about the vision, trying to create some ownership, and trying to "create some kind of heritage", and (d) some of the obstacles which would hamper or delay achievement of the vision were articulated. The respondent felt compelled to speculate upon some of the trends that loomed on the horizon which he felt were going to prevent the system from realizing its vision.

Fulfilling the Role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

To fulfill the role of chief executive officer the superintendent must work "with the board of trustees to set the overall framework to ensure that trustees are able to make wise decisions as to how the district will function." This included, "setting the stage," engaging the board in the establishment of goals, and the system in their implementation. The superintendent concluded that

> that's the whole business of advising the board on setting up policies that I think are reasonable which emerge through our consultative process. Get their approval, consider their input, provide modifications to things that require changing through the political process that they engage in as individual trustees and then as the collective board.

Achievement of this priority necessitated doing "a lot of background work for board meetings to ensure that good information was forthcoming from all central office staff." All information presented to the board was rehearsed and critiqued by senior staff to ensure that trustees received pertinent information upon which to make sound decisions. The superintendent concurred with and was prepared to endorse and recommend to the board all policy proposals which were recommended by a member of the administrative team. Before policies were recommended, there were many consultations. The superintendent emphasized that "participatory democracy" was carried out extensively in the system.

Identifying Needs

According to one respondent the first task of the superintendent was to identify the system's needs and then to convince the board that these needs were important and should be addressed.

The superintendent identified these needs mainly "through perception, by keeping [an] ear to the ground, and by holding discussions with principals and teachers."

Acquiring Financial Resources

One superintendent stated that he spent "a lot of time on resource acquisition and budgeting." To achieve this priority the financial needs of the district were clearly communicated to Alberta Education and schools were informed as to how the board received its revenue so they knew which kinds of things mattered. He observed, "Schools now know that the system is funded on the basis of the number of students enrolled, if schools enroll more students then their grants increase. They may also get more staff." This superintendent ensured that all provincial grant applications were correctly completed and promptly submitted to prevent any delays in funding.

Providing Leadership

One superintendent's top priority was "to provide leadership to the system." He remarked, "If I don't provide leadership for the whole system then nobody else will." He acknowledged that other individuals had provided leadership from time to time and on various tasks, but overall it was his responsibility to ensure that leadership was provided to the whole system.

The superintendent performed this function by ensuring that the board was focused upon the establishment of educational priorities when engaged in strategic planning. He also issued clear warnings to the board not to do things on the spur of the moment. "Three day retreats" for the board to examine carefully the consequences of their actions were suggested while the board was engaged in strategic planning. He gave the following story to illustrate his point

> the board and myself could be compared to a pilot of a big 747 jet, your flying in the skies, before you flip a switch, before you pull a lever you'd better know what the result of that is going to be.

According to this superintendent, principals were "the key people in the system." They were the driving force. Teachers were very crucial, superintendents and boards were important but principals were key." He saw them as being on site where the action was taking place. If they were enthused, if they knew where they were going and had their priorities straight, then teachers followed and good things happened for students. Because of the importance of the principalship, the superintendent stated spent considerable time with principals each month, performing inspirational activities. The agendas of principals meetings were comprised of broad general issues. "Principals need to be thinking on a higher plane, they need to have a broad point of view, rather than a narrow technical one," he stated.

Another means of providing system leadership was to hold financial responsibility as a strong theme. He believed that to improve the system required more than simply adding money.

Being innovative was another important part of providing leadership to the system. He exposed staff to new ideas. He enjoyed talking to teachers who were excited about some new idea. These teachers were given the freedom to experiment. He encouraged others to "look ahead and move education into the 21st. century."

As system leader, an important function was to develop a positive attitude throughout the organization. To facilitate this, "a futures day" was held to examine ways and means of coping with the future. On this day, the public was challenged to look ahead and to be optimistic about the future, rather than to be always looking back and complaining about the past. Futurists were engaged to address the public and principals were encouraged to attend these functions. Further to this he stated, "I like to think that in a small way I've been instrumental in getting people to look ahead at what they can be, rather than still wishing they had what they had five or ten years ago."

In summary, leadership was provided to this system by involving trustees in strategic planning, by providing support and challenges to principals, by advocating financial responsibility, by opening minds to focus on new ideas, by being positive, and by fostering optimism about the future.

Providing Resources

One superintendent's priority was "to provide teachers and other staff members with the necessary resources to provide the best possible education for students."

Attempts were made to provide adequate resources by "maintaining a close relationship with Department of Education officials." As well, teachers were encouraged to express their needs. Once these needs were identified it was incumbent upon the system to satisfy them. This process was achieved by holding regular meetings with each school staff and engaging them in a "needs identification session" where they were encouraged to freely express their feelings on things lacking in both their own particular curriculum area and in the whole school.

Setting Goals

Goal setting was a priority of one superintendent. The central office staff was the primary group used in this activity, but others were also involved on a more ad-hoc basis. Goals for the organization were established and policies were developed to facilitate the accomplishment of these goals.

To update goals the board engaged in an annual review. In addition, the goals and policies were constantly monitored by the staff at the central office to ensure completion. Goal-setting had a positive side effect. It provided the opportunity for the superintendent to motivation central office staff and school personnel to work toward the achievement of these established district goals.

Ensuring Smooth Operation

According to one respondent, the system operated smoothly when "teachers did their jobs well." This was facilitated by "dealing in the best possible way with conflict, and by establishing the right mood in the community towards schools." He further stated, "We really have to set the environment so that teachers can do their jobs as effectively as possible, because in the end you have a teacher/student organization. We're all servants of those people. We must never forget that."

He presented a number of key activities, which if adhered to, would facilitate the smooth operation of the system. First, and most important "was the development of a solid set of policies on all important matters." Policies enabled the superintendent and others to perform their job functions with some degree of consistency. Policy development was a long and involved process. In this school system, policies on any topic could be requested by anyone. The first draft of the policy was almost always written by the department to which it related. That is, if it was a purchasing policy, it was written by the secretary-treasurer; if it was an administrative policy, it was written by administrators. Draft policies were referred to a policy advisory committee consisting of trustees, principals, teachers, and the superintendent. This committee decided whether or not they would recommend the draft policy to the board. In the event it was not recommended, the committee still presented it, but clearly stated that it was not recommended by the advisory committee. In considering a draft, the committee posed such questions as "does this make sense" or "is this draft a direct contradiction of some already established policy?" If the policy advisory committee agreed with the proposal it was recommended to the board for approval in principle, which constituted the first reading. The approved-in-principle policy was then referred back to the various advisory committees of parents, students councils, teachers, and principals for reactions. This process gave all interested parties the opportunity for input into policy development. In this system "no teacher could say they didn't have a chance to look at every policy before it was approved," the superintendent noted. This long and involved process of development "ensured a fairly easy implementation."

"Pronouncing is a mistake. A lot of ground is usually lost by dictating except in areas where people want you to dictate," emphasized this superintendent. He strongly advocated consultation. The main consultative groups for the superintendent were the central office administrators and principals. Only crisis decisions were made without first consulting with these groups. "The reason for consultation," indicated the superintendent, "is because I don't trust my own judgment, I don't think I'm informed enough to know how everybody's feeling, or how everybody will react to a particular idea."

Issues and problems had to be dealt with on a timely basis to ensure that systems operated smoothly according to this superintendent. This was achieved by immediately assigning issues to somebody, or by immediately dealing with them himself. "I think leaving important issues creates enormous problems because they begin to sprout like mushrooms," he stated. If an issue is dealt with and gotten on with, "people know you are doing your best to solve it, it keeps things under control." Quick reaction was important and "made the system run smoothly." He also thought it was important to make decisions with a degree of finality and authority because changing decisions after they were made creates confusion and demonstrates a lack of foresight.

Open communication throughout the system was also advocated. This superintendent felt he should be "available to any teacher or parent" who needed his services. Although he worked in a large system he "moved into the trenches."

Other necessary conditions for a system to operate smoothly were presented. During the recruiting process the system sought people who had demonstrated that they were industrious. Effective employees honestly liked people, were easily liked themselves, established rapport quickly, were honestly concerned about children, and did not abide by rules for the sake of abiding by them. "These effective employees always had a vision" he concluded. "Most people think that administration has something to do with shuffling paper. It's got nothing to do with that," he stated. "It's got to do with vision, which means you have a knowledge of where you're going and how you're going to get there." Finally, students were happy in smoothly run systems.

In summary, a smoothly operated system was one which had developed sound policies; had effective communication among its constituents; dealt openly, fairly, timely, and honestly with issues when they arose; had a committed, capable, devoted, and energetic staff. The superintendent was accessible. He did not dictate, except on rare occasions. Staff members who were capable of handling situations as they arose were selected. Finally, the superintendent made sure that after members of the organization understood their job functions and were given the authority to perform them.

Personnel Priorities

The Personnel Priorities are listed in Table 4.1 and their Methods of Achievement in Table 4.3.

Communicating Effectively

Communicating effectively was a priority of 24% of the superintendents. Kindred, Bagin and Gallagher (1984) stated that, "communication is a cooperative enterprise requiring the mutual interchange of ideas and information, out of which understanding develops and action is taken" (p. 78). Johns (1988) viewed "communication [as] the process by which information is exchanged between a sender and a receiver" (p. 347). One of the respondents stated

> I have a very broad concept of communication in mind. I'm not just talking about paper communication, I'm talking about people with each other and so on. That whole issue of not just my office or the board, but also, facilitating communication among people out there.

This same superintendent expressed a need to communicate clearly both ways, i. e., from the community to the professional staff and vice versa. Another respondent advocated, "communication with all of the stakeholders in the system." Superintendents communicated frequently with personnel within their jurisdictions. Most meet weekly with the senior administrative staff. "At these meetings," one superintendent remarked, "we receive reports on initiatives taken, ask questions, and keep each other informed of what's happening in the system." Teacher committees were established to address educational issues; this automatically meant that communication was taking place. To facilitate good communication seminars focusing on major themes were organized among staff and trustees. In one system, the superintendent spent time in the schools, attended staff development sessions, participated in informal gatherings, attended staff meetings, and participated in home-school parent advisory committee meetings.

Table 4.3

Methods of Achieving Personnel Priorities of Superintendents

Communicating effectively

- Attend informal gatherings.
- Attend parent advisory meetings.
- Attend school staff meetings.
- Be visible in the schools.
- Conduct programs for parents and principals on voluntarism.
- Encourage parents from different communities to cooperate.
- Encourage trustees to become involved in staff in-service sessions.
- Establish a think-tank session involving students, parents, teachers, administrators, and trustees.
- Establish many different networks.
- Establish partnership as one of the board's goals.
- Exert effort to get to know students and community members personally.
- Hold administrative seminars on major issues.
- Involve many teacher committees when dealing with issues.
- Involve yourself in local service clubs.
- Place a strong emphasis on parental involvement.
- Set up a committee of parents, teachers, board members, and principals to work on building relationships.
- Simulate board meetings by placing students in the role of trustees.

Maintaining good relationships

- Arrange for meetings of trustees and principals to discuss district issues.
- Arrange meeting of board and staff annually.
- Attend school-staff meetings to listen to concerns.
- Facilitate board-grade 12 exit interviews.
- Identify problems and deal with them promptly.
- Keep everybody informed.
- Meet with students and teachers periodically.
- Work with non-instructional staff.

Setting roles

- Have senior staff roles approved by board.
- Involve people affected.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Methods of Achieving Personnel Priorities of Superintendents

Developing leadership of administrators

- Continually stress the importance of instructional leadership.
- Direct energies to enhancing their role.
- Give them authority to carry out their responsibilities.
- Provide "all" with encouragement and support.
- Provide constant interaction--daily conversations and weekly meetings.
- Set the stage for them to function as strong leaders.
- Spend time coaching them in a supportive role.
- Work with administrators who are in trouble.

Improving competence of teachers

- Convince teachers of what is best for students.
- Develop in teachers an appropriate philosophy.
- Ensure teachers talk to each other.
- Provide teachers with in-service support.
- Regularly assemble teachers to share ideas.
- Visit classrooms as much as possible.
- Work with each teacher individually.

Involving staff in implementing plan

- Discuss plans and ascertain ways to achieve them.
- Empower staff to implement plan in their own domain.
- Hold administrative seminars and focus on major themes.
- Hold meetings weekly with senior administrative staff where reports are expected, initiatives are viewed, questions are asked, and everybody is kept informed.
- Hold retreats for administrators of three-day duration.
- Involve lots of teacher committees.
- Mould and shape in very subtle ways.

Rotating administrators

- Agree upon performance objectives and ensure they have relevance to the school.
- Develop a strategy to ensure that movement takes place.
- Hire new people on term contracts with the option of renewal.
- Impress upon the board and principals that the need for movement exists.
- Rotate administrators on the basis of evaluation results.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Methods of Achieving Personnel Priorities of Superintendents

Selecting administrative staff

Attend all department and final interviews.
Be directly involved in the hiring of all administrative personnel.
Choose most principals internally.
Hold the position that nobody will be appointed as assistant principal who might not some day be a principal.
Recommend personally to the board all administrative appointments.
Hire assistant superintendents who have a broad experiential background.

Selecting and maintaining high-quality staff

Constantly check on teachers by visiting classrooms with the intention of improving performance.
Ensure principals "buy into" the teachers that are selected.
Evaluate new teachers frequently.
Hire teachers from the list recommended by principals.

Being available

Have a policy that speaks directly to communication.
Inform teachers first-hand of current developments.
Maintain a close relationship with Alberta Education.
Maintain an open-door policy.
Be personally available to all district staff.
Meet principals regularly.
Project the image of being part of the team.

Building agreements

Commend people by talking about their strengths.
Hold a multitude of meetings.
Pay attention to people.
Recognize the importance of people to the organization.
Work with principals encouraging them to see themselves as winners.

Evaluating principals

Spend time with principals.
Submit a report to the board that means something.
Talk to parents, teachers, and students.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Methods of Achieving Personnel Priorities of Superintendents

Involving stakeholders in decision making

- Appoint teachers to the board's policy review committee.
- Consult many different stakeholders before recommending policy.
- Develop a policy requiring the involvement of stakeholders in policy making.
- Distribute quarterly tabloids to every household.
- Involve as many people as possible in developing a strategic plan.
- Maintain employee relations committee with non-teaching personnel.
- Meet annually with chairmen of all advisory committees.
- Meet teachers regularly to discuss items of interest.
- Support parent advisory committees in each school.

Involving teachers in decision making

- Direct energies to setting up situations to ensure that everybody is a leader in the system.
- Discuss the notion of "leadership density" with teachers.
- Encourage staff to present projects.
- Ensure support for those who wish to become involved.
- Establish a steering committee comprised of teachers and administrators.
- Hold weekly-meetings on the topic.
- Set the stage to facilitate involvement.
- Set up three-week summer academies to focus on staff leadership.

Providing support to teachers

- Provide reinforcement to teachers following evaluations.
- Spend time with teachers in their classrooms.

Working together

- Attempt to eliminate people's personal problems.
- Develop a slogan such as "enthusiastic, committed personnel, dedicated to quality education."
- Ensure people are not upset or afraid of being fired.
- Communicate with and attempt to understand people.
- Spend time in schools and in the community.

Notes. All of the above-listed methods were mentioned once. They are arranged in alphabetical order.

A mechanism called the "think tank session" was introduced in another system to facilitate communication between and among students, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members. These sessions involved a round table discussion "about what is and what ought to be." The information generated from these sessions was then presented at a workshop comprised of trustees and administrators. Another mechanism used by the same system, referred to as a "simulated board of education meeting," engaged students and parents in the role of board members. They were given an agenda of issues to deal with.

Another superintendent communicated with interested parties through a quarterly tabloid which was distributed to every household in the school system. Regular meetings were held with teachers to discuss items of mutual concern. A teacher representative was appointed to serve on the board's policy review committee. Committees of non-teaching staff met regularly to deal with their own personal concerns.

Some boards mandated that different groups communicate prior to adopting policies. One respondent stated, "we have a policy on policy making, which really says we have to consult a lot of different groups before we recommend policies to the board." In this case, parent advisory committees were established at each school to meet regularly with principals. An umbrella group comprised of the chairman of each of these committees met annually with the board "to review proposed policies and projected budgets."

Superintendents vigorously promoted the involvement of as many people as possible in the decision making process. They were frequent communicators, hence, they needed to develop effective communication skills. It was imperative for them to know how, what, and who to communicate with.

Maintaining Good Relationships

Maintaining good working relationships among the board, the staff, and the administration was a priority of three superintendents. It was important to inculcate a feeling of "pulling together and understanding one another, "emphasized one superintendent.

Communication was a very important part of the process of maintaining good relationships. All members of the organization were to be kept up to date on what was happening and why. Superintendents informed trustees and teachers of their plans. Trustees in one district visited every school and met with every staff annually to listen to their concerns. In this same system, the board held an annual social gathering of all staff and trustees. A teacher liaison committee was established to discuss system issues and to keep staff informed of developments at the central office. Board members in this district were quite receptive to staff suggestions. One respondent gained satisfaction from talking to teachers, meeting with students, dealing with principals, and communicating with the public as opposed to writing reports. He felt a need to understand people, and to be understood by them. In this system the slogan was "enthusiastic, committed personnel, dedicated to quality education."

Setting Roles

Setting roles for central office personnel to facilitate the goals of the organization was the first priority of one superintendent.

The superintendent worked cooperatively with trustees and central office personnel to establish their roles. After these roles were agreed upon staff performance was constantly monitored. During these monitoring sessions he "was looking for ways to motivate people and therefore, talked about their strengths and successes rather than their weaknesses."

Developing Leadership of Administrators

"Working with assistant superintendents and school principals to ensure that they functioned as a strong, independent, but still, team-oriented leaders" was a priority of one superintendent. Considerable time was devoted to helping principals function as strong instructional leaders. If principals experienced problems with this role, central office personnel working with them; if not, then encouragement and support was forthcoming. This support was often provided by helping principals "interpret the political wills that impacted upon" the delivery of educational services. Daily conversations and weekly meetings were held with the district administrators. At these meetings it was continually stressed that principals were instructional leaders. "Instructional leadership encompassed a very broad description of tasks," observed the superintendent. Principals were made aware that they had the major responsibility for activities within their schools and would be held accountable for them.

Improving Competence of Teachers

A priority of one superintendent was to "make teachers the best they could be."

To improve the competence of teachers "you cannot come from on high and say this is the way its going to be, especially with teachers who have been enjoying success for a long period of time," observed the superintendent. Instead they had to be convinced, that what was advocated was in the best interest of students. Teachers were encouraged and provided training sessions on current teaching methodologies. To do this he remarked "you have to work with each teacher as an individual, visit classrooms, talk to teachers, observe what they are doing, and always try to push them a little bit further." At these meetings, the motivated teachers, i.e., those who felt secure, took charge. This was a very effective way of implementing change because change was now advocated by their peers. This was perceived to be a far more effective therapeutic approach than coming from the superintendent personally.

Involving Staff in Implementing System Plan

One superintendent's first priority was to develop a district plan, his second priority was to ensure that this plan was "understood and implemented."

To ensure implementation, the senior administrative staff consisting of the secretary-treasurer and assistant superintendents acted as a steering committee. This committee reported directly to the superintendent. Weekly meetings were held to monitor the plan, to receive reports, to ask questions of each other, and to measure progress.

In addition to the involvement of the senior administrative staff, a number of teacher committees were set up to address issues. The superintendent demonstrated his commitment to the involvement of all staff in the execution of the plan by personally substituting in schools so that "teachers could be freed from classes to attend these planning sessions." This demonstrated to administrators, to classroom teachers, and even to secretaries that each could determine success in their jobs. He remarked that, "A massive endeavor was undertaken to empower people."

The support of school administrators was crucial in implementing system plans. To help principals in this process, administrator seminars focusing on major themes which they had chosen were held.

Trustees were involved not only in the development of the plan but also in its implementation. They were encouraged to attend staff development sessions and participate in the discussion of educational plans for schools. In this way they demonstrating that they were attempting to understand the concerns of staffs. Often they took the time to attend professional development sessions with principals.

In summary, the superintendent coordinated the activities of the whole system in implementing the agreed upon plan. Central office staff, teachers, non-teaching personnel, school administrators, and trustees were all involved. Implementing the plan was a total system effort.

Rotating Administrators

A recognized need in one school system was to transfer administrators from one school to another for a number of reasons. A number of teachers without administrative training had gotten into administration when they first started teaching because it was difficult to recruit qualified administrators. They were still occupying these positions many years later with less than satisfactory performance. The superintendent realized that to "have a healthy system, you had to have opportunities for highly trained administrators to occupy these positions." This meant creating the right climate for administrators to move freely within the system and even to apply some pressure if necessary. He stated that, "he realized that this was easy to advocate but more difficult to do." However, one of the strategies which proved to be useful was to offer new administrators five-year renewable contracts. Initially, this prompted a strong reaction from principals, but "the Collective Agreement and the Schools Act permitted it," said the respondent. He sold this policy by assuring principals that "it was not a matter of saying to an individual you're gone, it's a matter of in five years we can assess what's been done with a view to looking at the next five years, and see how you feel, and how we feel about what should be done." He reported that "eventually principals became satisfied with the process, especially when they knew that their performance was in accordance with expectations; that those expectations were going to be viewed, and it was going to mean something in the end."

Selecting Administrative Staff

Being "directly involved in the selection of all the administrative personnel" was a priority of one superintendent. This was achieved by insisting on being personally involved in all the interviews from "the appointment of assistant principals to the associate superintendent." Most principals were selected from internal applicants while the opposite was true for assistant superintendents. The assistant superintendents' positions were staffed by people who had a broad educational and experiential background, necessitating the hiring of people who were not "locals." "The board makes the final decision on who is hired, but I've never been over ruled on my recommendation," remarked the superintendent. He felt it was vitally important to select the right administrators, because by this act the superintendent indirectly influenced the selection of teachers.

Selecting and Maintaining High-quality Staff

A priority of one superintendent was "first to hire and then to maintain staff of the highest quality." The hiring in this case was done by a personnel department which provided principals with a"short list" from which to select the best candidate. This method ensured that principals took personal responsibility for the success of newly appointed staff.

Attempts were made to maintain high-quality staff by closely monitoring new teachers to the district for a period of two years. Although tenured teachers were continually monitored the superintendent suggested a need to "work mostly with the younger ones and try to improve their performance, because it's much more difficult to change the more experienced staff."

Being Available

A priority of one superintendent was "to be available to whomever is a partner in education in this community and to cooperate on matters of concern with a view to resolving them."

In this system, regular meetings were held with district staff. The school boards policy manual specified cooperation and involvement. All staff and trustees were involved in the development of a mission statement. It was important to maintain a close relationship with Department of Education officials in order "to keep up to date on educational developments in the province." The superintendent stressed that he was part of the team and wanted to build that kind of rapport. He said, "'I've often stated to our teachers', you know my door is always open, if you have a concern or problem that you think I can help with, please drop in." He concluded his discussion on this priority by saying, "As a matter of fact I've been criticized by some people for being too available; if that's a criticism, then that's a criticism I like to continually hear."

Building Agreements

One respondent considered "building agreements" a priority. By building agreements he meant

> to find out the diverse opinions and points of view that people have on various issues, give them an opportunity to debate these, look for a point of agreement, i. e., where the various parties can say we found the magic book, the magic recipe, and so forth and that's the direction we're going to go.

This priority was achieved by "paying close attention to people" and recognizing that "as a superintendent you have to work through others to achieve goals." People within the organization had to see themselves as winners. He stated that, "He spent considerable time focusing people on their strengths in a supportive and building environment."

Evaluating Principals

"Evaluating principals" was a priority of one superintendent. He conversed with parents, teachers, and students. In addition, he spent considerable time with principals. After this, the superintendent felt he was conversant with activities which occurred within the school. Following which, he was convinced he was able to submit "a report which meant something." The respondent observed that principals who had undergone this evaluative process "had respect for it" because their performance had improved. After two-weeks of observation and discussions the superintendent was confident in going to the board and making realistic recommendations for improvement.

Involving Stakeholders in Decision Making

A superintendent's priority was "to involve the various stakeholders as much as possible in the decision making process."

To facilitate this involvement a consultation committee of teachers was established to "meet regularly and discuss items of mutual interest," also a teacher representative served on the board's policy review committee. Liaison and employee relations committees were established to involve non-teaching personnel. Parent advisory committees were set up at all schools to meet regularly with principals, to both give feedback from the community and to listen to responses from principal. In addition, the chairman of each of these advisory committees met annually with the board to review policies and the budget. The board was so committed to the involvement of people in the decision making process that it had a board policy which stated that, "We have to consult a lot of different groups before we recommend policies." The superintendent indicated that they we're trying to build up as much involvement as possible because it created a feeling of responsibility and ownership throughout the system.

Involving Teachers in Decision Making

Developing leadership among staff who were not in formal designated leadership positions was a priority of one respondent. He indicated that Sergiovanni's "leadership density" was the model used to promote leadership among teachers.

Considerable energy was directed towards setting up situations for each staff member to be a leader in the school district. Frequent discussions were held with teachers. Opportunities were provided for staff who were interested, "to take on leadership responsibilities." There was support for anybody who wished to become involved in the growth and development of the school system. The superintendent observed that he "set the stage for teachers who had the expertise, the enthusiasm, the willingness, and the interest to go beyond just what was normally expected of them."

Two visible activities promoted the involvement of teachers in decision making. First, weekly breakfast meetings were held on the topic of leadership. A group of teachers and administrators acted as a steering committee for these meetings. Interested staff members were invited to present proposals for acceptance and funding. Second, the district sponsored a summer academy for three weeks to focus on the sole issue of developing leadership among the staff. The superintendent and some assistants attended these academies to show interest and support.

Providing Support to Teachers

A respondent stated that a priority was "to provide feedback and support for teachers." The results of teacher evaluations were used to positively reinforce and to recognize the work that teachers were doing, and at the same time to provide assistance if needed. In addition to the evaluation of individual teachers, whole schools were evaluated. All schools in this system were evaluated over a prescribed cycle. During the evaluation of schools, time was spent in classrooms, each teacher in the school was interviewed and issued a questionnaire, selected students were interviewed, whole classes were surveyed, all parents were interviewed at parent/teacher nights, and trustee involvement was solicited. The results of these school evaluations were published, again providing feedback to teachers.

Working Together

One superintendent's priority was to ensure that all parts of the system worked together as a cohesive unit. To help rectify the lack of cooperation among the various constituencies "the board established partnership as one of its goals." A committee of parents, teachers, principals, and board members were formed "to bring about a closer relationship among everyone." A strong emphasis was placed on parental involvement. The respondent provided the following opinion, "Research is clear, the more parental involvement, the more students realize that we're all in this together and there isn't this separateness of school and home; the more beneficial it is for all concerned."

The superintendent initiated staff training on the mechanics of conducting productive meetings, because more cooperation and more involvement necessitated more meetings. He noted that "people could be really turned off if they have to attend poorly run meetings."

Instructional Priorities

The list of the Instructional Priorities of Superintendents is presented in Table 4.1. The Methods of their Achievement are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Methods of Achieving Instructional Priorities of Superintendents

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Providing appropriate programs

Believe students develop at different rates; therefore develop programs to accommodate individual differences.
Encourage the board to support school program initiatives.
Focus on programs, not class size.
Maintain a heavy involvement in special education programs.
Maintain an active role in program evaluation.
Procure programs from outside the system if need is not met from within.
Provide advanced children with adequate materials.
Support principals' proposals on program needs.
Talk about student program needs as much as possible.

Focusing on teaching and learning

Encourage the board to maintain low pupil/teacher ratios.
Facilitate the work of staff.
Interact with staff on curriculum and instructional matters.
Place a high priority on staff development.
Spend considerable time in classrooms evaluating teachers.

Enhancing student growth

Attack the use of drugs and alcohol by students.
Encourage students to provide a service to the community.
Form a community-based group to exercise a leadership role.
Make a strong commitment to the spiritual, moral, physical, and social formation of youth.
Place a strong emphasis on academic subjects.
Place resources where needed.
Provide adequate personnel time.
Spend time discussing curriculum and instruction.

Ensuring student success

Believe that all children are very much individuals who develop at different rates.
Don't necessarily see children as bright, but merely as advanced in development.
Group children to ensure they master one set of concepts before moving to the next set.
Integrate programs and students.
Move students through a continuum of learning skills.
Teach to each student, not to the average.

Note. All of the above-listed methods were mentioned once. They are arranged in alphabetical order.

Providing Appropriate Programs

Three superintendents stated that a first priority was to provide and deliver programs that meet the needs of students. In one system, comprised of a number of small schools, the staff were encouraged to focus on offering programs as opposed to concentrating on pupil teacher ratios. In addition, programs were periodically evaluated. Reports from these evaluations often culminated into program changes to accommodate the many needsof students. The office staff and trustees responded to these recommendations by supporting initiatives at the school level.

The superintendent in another school system strongly advocated providing individual programs for each and every student, although he realized that this was not always possible. He stated, "Every child is very much an individual. They develop at different rates. We are not teaching to the average within the class; we are teaching to each individual." He expected children to be grouped so that they could master one set of concepts before moving to the next; students gradually moved along a continuum. The superintendent was confident that teachers adjusted programs to fit the needs of students. With respect to to this he stated that

> we have to develop programs in our classrooms to suit the needs of those students who are in our classrooms each year. Although, we tie student needs into the curriculum as much as possible, to me, the child developmental factors are the things we really concentrate on.

Another respondent felt that to be assured of providing programs to meet the needs of individual student programs had to be monitored very closely. After a student problem was identified, and if an appropriate program did not exist within the system, "we go outside . . . and buy a particular program for that student," remarked the superintendent. He further stated "we are constantly aware of the programs we are offering and the needs of the students and we attempt to meet those needs by lobbying or whatever."

Focusing on Teaching and Learning

A first priority of one respondent was "to maintain a focus on students, teaching, and learning." This was partly achieved by strongly urging the board to maintain low pupil-teacher ratios. He stated "the low pupil-teacher ratio reflects the priority we have on individualization and on meeting the needs of students."

This superintendent spent considerable time in classrooms evaluating teachers. He was involved in 35-40 teacher evaluations annually. This was a high priority because it gave him the "opportunity to be in the classrooms and to work directly with teachers.

In order to maintain this focus, the system held 40-50 staff development sessions annually. These sessions further afforded the superintendent the "opportunity to meet with teachers and to keep in touch with what was going on." Teachers were given the opportunity to express their concerns, and on the other hand the superintendent took advantage of the opportunity to "inform teachers where education was heading in the province."

Enhancing Student Growth

A priority of one superintendent was to cooperate with the community to enhance the academic, spiritual, social, and physical development of students.

Academic growth was enhanced by giving it a high priority. Results of diploma exams were carefully analyzed. After analysis of these results, administrators spent time aligning the curriculum and allocating necessary resources to assure student success. Diploma exams were considered them an excellent indicator of student success and further they helped promote the basic purpose of schooling--the academic growth of students.

The spiritual, social, and physical development of youth was enhanced by making a strong district commitment to "student assistance." Assistance was provided in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse by a community-based group of parents and social agencies. The respondent observed that the group was "becoming not only a support, but in fact assume leadership in this whole area."

Ensuring Student Success

Ensuring student success or enhancing student achievement was stated as a first priority of one superintendent. This superintendent believed that he had to start from the premise that "each child was very much an individual, and that they developed at different rates." Student success therefore, can only be assured if programs are provided to meet the individual needs of children. This necessitated a careful examination of the child's strengths and weaknesses followed by the introduction of programs to enhance strengths and to overcome weaknesses.

Chapter Summary

The 13 superintendents presented three general priorities each, for a maximum of 39. There was some agreement among respondents on priorities, so the total number identified amounted only to 29. These 29 general priorities were coded under three major headings as follows: System (9), Personnel (16), and Instructional (4).

The following subheadings were placed under the System heading: planning, developing mission statements, fulfilling the role of chief executive officer, identifying needs, acquiring financial resources, providing leadership, providing resources, setting goals, and ensuring smooth operation of the system. The findings are summarized below.

All of the above can be considered an aspect of planning. System planning processes were complex and required the involvement of many individuals and groups. Two fundamentally different planning processes were used--"top-down" where the general directions were established by the board, "bottom-up" where the district plan evolved from the individual plans of various constituent groups. In their development of a mission statements systems again involved all stakeholders. Different viewpoints and positions were debated with a view to reaching a consensus. Closely related to the priority of developing a mission statement was that of creating a shared vision. In this case the mission statement was developed over an extensive period of time with "an eye on the future."

Leadership was provided to one educational system when these conditions existed: trustees were trained in the methods of strategic planning, removed themselves from administrivia, devoted time to policy development, and inspirational activities; principals were engaged in their own professional development; staff were encouraged to be innovative and were exposed to current teaching methodologies; parents were encouraged to think positively and focus on the future.

School systems operated smoothly when appropriate organizational structures were in place, conflict was dealt with effectively, an environment facilitating the maximum potential of teachers was evident, a sound set of policies was in place, consultation was practiced, open and honest communication processes occurred, hard work was appreciated, issues and problems were dealt with on a timely basis, decisions followed consultation and were made with a degree of finality, the superintendent was accessible, staff were genuinely concerned with students, staff developed good rapport with each other, all had a vision of the future, clear expectations were set, and staff were delegated authority commensurate with responsibility.

Identification of the needs of the system required a keen perception and extensive discussions with principals and teachers. Goal setting closely related to needs identification primarily involved trustees and central office staffs. However all staff participated in developing performance objectives to operationalize these goals.

These 16 priorities were placed under the Personnel Focus: communicating effectively, maintaining good relationships, setting roles, developing leadership of administrators, improving competence of teachers, involving staff in implementing system plan, rotating administrators, selecting administrative staff, selecting and maintaining high quality staff, being available, building agreements, evaluating principals, involving stakeholders in decision making, involving teachers in decision making, providing support to teachers, and working together.

Communicating effectively a priority of three superintendents seemed to be underlying a number of other personnel priorities. Educational organizations are "people organizations." To achieve maximum effectiveness the many constituent groups must cooperate and work together to achieve system goals. Systems devised various methods of achieved this priority depending on local circumstances. "Partnership" was established as a major theme, principals were encouraged to form committees consisting of parents, teachers and trustees, superintendents were visible in the schools and attended as many informal gatherings as possible, and encouraging trustees to become involve in staff development sessions.

Leadership of administrators was developed by setting the stage for them to function as strong leaders, directing energies to enhance their roles, working with those who are experiencing trouble, providing encouragement to those who are not, giving them the authority to carry out the responsibility of their jobs, providing constant interaction, and continually stressing instructional leadership. One system transferred principals from one school to another by impressing upon the board and principals that the need for change existed. He developing an action plan consisting of placing all new principals on term contracts and conducting meaningful evaluations. Evaluations sometimes consisted of holding discussions and administering questionnaires to parents, teachers, and students, after which, a written report was submitted to the board.

Superintendents were conscious of their responsibility to recruiting, selecting, and maintaining high quality staff. After these staff had been selected the system was to take responsibility for their upgrading and updating. This upgrading and updating of staff occurred by developing in them an appropriate philosophy, convincing them what was best for students, conducting in-service sessions where teachers were provided the opportunity to share ideas, working with teachers individually, and visiting classrooms as frequently as possible.

Four priorities were coded under the Instructional Focus as follows: providing appropriate programs, focusing on teaching and learning, enhancing student growth, and ensuring student success.

These superintendents focused on the instructional program by focusing on programs rather than class size, discussing student needs extensively, maintaining an active role in program evaluation, supporting principals' proposals on program needs, encouraging trustees to support school program initiatives, devoting considerable time to teacher evaluation and development, placing a strong emphasis on the academic, spiritual, moral, physical, and social formation of youth, and putting resources where needed.

During the follow-up interviews, the 12 superintendents generally were not surprised by and concurred with the findings, except that the priority assigned to "fulfilling the role of the chief executive office" was considered simplistic and obvious by two respondents. A number commented upon the interrelatedness of the priorities. For example, "planning," "setting goals," and "communicating effectively" were all components of "providing leadership." Also, some observed that priorities change, and that those reported were the priorities at the time of the interview and may be different at some later date. Finally, most superintendents felt that the priorities reported could be priorities of their own individual school system.

Chapter 5

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM PRIORITIES

This chapter presents the findings related to Question 4 (a) of the interview schedule: "What are your priorities for educational programs in your schools?"

The 13 superintendents' responses were categorized under academic, special needs, social, technological, and spiritual program priorities. The frequency of responses is presented in Table 5.1. Most of the superintendents stated their priorities for education directly, while some used a more indirect approach, e.g., educational priorities were achieved by focussing on teachers. All superintendents provided at least one program priority and one respondent presented five. Their responses are presented below.

Academic

Academic programs included all those prescribed by Alberta Education. Respondents focused on the implementation, promotion, accessibility, development, provision, and evaluation of these programs.

Implement the Programs of Alberta Education Properly

Implementing the programs prescribed by the province properly and as intended, both in terms philosophy and content, was a priority of 38% of the superintendents. It was incumbent upon the district to "ensure that teachers had an appropriate interpretation of these programs," stated one respondent. This was achieved through a serious commitment to professional development, by providing "very liberal leave packages to teachers to update and upgrade themselves; not the one-day meeting, although these were provided as well." Some systems encouraged and funded inter-school visitation programs, one-year leaves, semester leaves, spring, and summer leaves to teachers. In addition to the more extended leaves, teachers in one system were financed to attend conferences

Table 5.1

Frequency of Mention of Educational Program Priorities

Program priority	f	Total
Academic		
Implement the programs of Alberta Education properly.	5	
Implement French.	1	
Promote whole-language orientation.	1	
Promote the process approach.	1	
Make all courses accessible to all students.	1	
Develop complex skills.	1	
Provide a general liberal education.	1	
Evaluate libraries.	1	12
Special needs		
Provide programs for special needs students.	5	
Ensure all students are literate.	2	
Provide programs for different ability levels.	1	
Provide student-centered education.	1	9
Social		
Develop programs to help alleviate social problems.	5	
Develop communication skills.	2	
Develop environmental awareness.	1	8
Technological		
Deliver programs on technology.	2	
Provide vocational programs.	1	3
Spiritual		
Reflect spiritual beliefs.	1	1
Total	33	33

Note. The number of educational program priorities mentioned by the superintendents ranged from 1 to 5.

"anywhere on the continent." Another superintendent remarked that, "We have a very progressive attitude in our system because people do rub shoulders with the newest and the best." All of this emphasis on professional development aimed at the interpretation of the curricula "ensured that teachers were knowledgeable and had the expertise to implement the educational programs appropriately.

Some superintendents were concerned about the limited choices of subjects offered to students attending smaller schools. Gifted students had to enroll in the "average" program. It was extremely difficult to cater to the needs and interests of students with limited numbers of staff and resources.

Changes and development of programs at the provincial level necessitated responsiveness at the local level. Current changes at the senior high level especially in science and social studies were causing concern. One responded expressed the concern as follows:

> Our priority has to be in the area of ensuring that the [senior high school] education program changes or any current changes to the academic . . . core component program are in fact in place and our teachers are equipped and knowledgeable to provide instruction to kids in the best possible way.

One respondent commented on the centralized aspect of program development in the province: "We're basically locked into Alberta Education, I mean we must follow the curriculum of their particular courses." A priority, therefore, had to be that school systems offer what they were "allowed to by Alberta Education."

The following comments were made during the follow-up interviews: "the fact that to implement the programs of Alberta Education properly received the highest frequency, demonstrates the central control over education in the province; a program priority was to deliver programs to meet the needs of all students and not necessarily be preoccupied with those programs prescribed by Alberta Education; with the volume of activities initiated by Alberta Education, it was virtually impossible to keep up with the changes; it would be more beneficial if programs were jointly developed by central authorities and the local jurisdictions; finally, the key word in this priority was "properly" which meant implementation in terms of content and philosophy.

Other Academic Programs

In one system the superintendent stated that the provision of "French language instruction" was a priority. Another system placed a high priority on the implementation of the whole-language philosophy. The superintendent observed that, "This is really not a program, it's an orientation." It had been quite threatening to teachers because they felt they were expected to make some significant changes and that they could no longer do the things they had been doing effectively in the past. Another respondent's priority was to help teachers to use a process approach in the teaching of elementary students, especially in the science programs. This was partially achieved by training them to effectively utilize manipulative aids in instructing students.

Accessibility to a variety of programs was a problem for small schools. Students in these schools did not have access to the variety of programs offered in larger schools, even in the same school system. Distance education was purported as a means of providing traditional programs and for disseminating information in such areas as effective decision-making skills and providing peer support. These programs, it was believed, enable students to better function as adults. These were considered supplementary to the educational program, but "they're also important," stated one superintendent.

Providing students with training in higher order skills was a priority in one system. The respondent felt it was not enough to provide students with a minimum level of skills; students need to be taught more complex analytical, synthetical, and problem-solving skills.

One superintendent objected to the fact that Alberta Education had recently tightened up the academic program so much that if students desired a liberal education, they had to attend school beyond the three high school years. His overall goal was to provide a general liberal education to all students who wanted it.

Students in one system were perceived to be lacking in the skills of retrieving and utilizing information effectively. To help correct this situation, the superintendent planned to evaluate their libraries and then initiate a program of teaching students how to effectively utilize them.

In summary, a number of superintendents did not emphasize the provision of core programs as a priority. Perhaps this occurred because, as one respondent stated, "our basic programs are good, I mean we're doing a good job with our basic education structure." The priorities under "Other Academic Programs" were varied and reflected the needs of particular systems at particular times.

Special Needs

Some students for a variety of reasons, are unable to benefit from the "regular academic" programs. Superintendents made it a priority to cater as much as reasonably possible to these diverse needs and abilities.

Providing Programs for Special Needs Students

A priority of 69% of the superintendents was to provide appropriate programs to students who were operating at both ends of the spectrum, i.e., the slow learners and the gifted. One system had developed an "inclusive school policy." Among other things, it was advocated by this policy that, "All children had a legitimate right to be educated in an age appropriate setting in their local neighborhood school, no matter what their ability or disability." Implementing this policy required the school system to examine differentiated curriculum and individual education plans. Support structures such as lifts, wheelchairs, special rooms, and teaching aids had to be put in place. Noting the challenges, one respondent stated, "when you have a class of 20-25 students and you have two mentally handicapped children . . . it's a real challenge; in a case like this you have to come from a fundamental belief that this is good for all children, the two as well as the others." He enthusiastically reported that "many teachers are pulling off such situations with outstanding success, and there are many beautiful stories to tell." Another presented a similar scenario. In his system there was as much mainstreaming as possible. The superintendent reported, "We have some severe cases that are right in our regular classrooms." These students were provided a full time teacher-assistant and enjoyed the full support of parents. Special education students progressed beyond expectations, mainly because other students helped with problems they were experiencing. While mainstreaming was advocated, the superintendent admitted that, "There were some classrooms that are segregated." In this system, mainstreaming was promoted but its limitations were realized.

Well-rounded programs were advocated to cater to the gifted as well as those who were experiencing learning problems. One superintendent stated, "We are trying to do something about the gifted students, we're really big on implementing and getting the programs that will bolster the whole class." He added that, "We have in-serviced our teachers this year and [developed] a policy on the provision of gifted and enrichment programs." A system priority was to focus on "students who were capable of doing more." Some systems had been mainstreaming for a long time, but the development of programs for the gifted was a recent phenomenon. He stated that, "for years in education we've paid lip service to looking after the individual child, but what I constantly push . . . is to get that program for that individual child."

Ensuring all Students are Literate

Two superintendents wanted to ensure that all students who graduated from the schools in their systems were literate. One stated, "We work hard to ensure that everyone that comes out of elementary school is a reader." The other wanted all children to meet minimum standards of reading, computation, and writing.

Providing Programs for Different Ability Levels

After getting the very best teachers in front of students; the system took some responsibility for keeping them upgraded. The superintendent stated that "good teachers can overcome bad programs but not vice versa." He advocated providing "as many programs as possible to cater to the different ability levels of students in their home schools." However, he admitted, "this was not always practical or possible."

Providing Student-centered Education

One superintendent strongly advocated the development of programs to meet the needs of every individual child. If children did not fit into classes, then classes had to be varied and versatile enough to meet the needs of all students. A priority was to develop "student-centered education," i.e., one in which the child and not the program was the focus.

Social

Emerging social issues and problems are having a negative effect upon some children. A priority of some of these superintendents was to alleviate some of the social tensions that existed among children.

During the follow-up interviews a number of superintendents noted the close relationship between "programs for special needs" and "programs to help alleviate social problems." The frequency of the responses demonstrates how important it was to provide improved services to students who had special needs and to those suffering from serious social problems, resulting from a down turn in the economy, the lack of respect for social institutions such as the church and school, and the break-up of the family unit. Some respondents expressed frustration over the lack of collaboration among the different social agencies. They expressed a need to establish one agency to coordinate the efforts of others at the system level. One superintendent queried whether "attending to social problems was our mandate." Another expressed concern about integration and how it would be handled by teachers. Some suggested that the needs of "average" students and "special needs" students had to be balanced. Others felt these problems were a "sign of the times." They have always existed, but were presently more prominent because systems were now taking some action to resolve them.

Develop Programs to Help Alleviate Social Problems

Programs were offered which helped students cope with societal pressures and problems. One system was in the process of delivering an ethics course to junior high students. This same system delivered a program on the harmful effects of the misuse of drugs and alcohol. A superintendent from a large school system stated that "our main thrust is to dealing with this increasing load of social problems which come to us from disruptive homes." One respondent was positive that by building good "public relations" the board would be in a favorable position to address some of the social ills. Another observed "a real change in the social emotional needs of kids as we move into the nineties." This being a rural school system with a number of small schools the superintendent's priority was to place guidance services in all schools. Most schools were too small to warrant the services of a full-time guidance specialist, so the superintendent advocated "having a person in each school who was trained, so that if, a crisis situation comes up, or if a kid needs someone to talk to . . . there will be a person on that staff who can fulfill that role." Finally, in another district students were provided training in decision making so that "they could better function as adults." This same district advocated the merits of students helping students; schools were encouraged to become heavily involved in peer support.

Developing Communication Skills

A priority of two superintendents was to promote and foster good communication skills. These skills were achieved when students "were proficient in reading, writing, listing, and speaking," according to one of the respondents.

Developing Environmental Awareness

Addressing environmental problems and issues was a first priority of one system. The superintendent did not elaborate.

Technological

A priority of 23% of the superintendents was, first to upgrade teachers on the use of technology in program delivery, and second to create an awareness among students of its benefits and shortcomings.

Deliver Programs on Technology

Two rural systems were heavily involved in acquiring sophisticated communications technology for all schools. These systems wanted to access more and better programs for students who attended smaller remote schools. Computers and other technological aids were installed to deliver programs by distance education.

Provide Vocational Programs

The implementation of industrial and business education programs to cater to the needs and interests of the large numbers of students who dropped out was a concern of one superintendent.

Spiritual

One superintendent advocated the development of the whole child in which spiritual development was an extremely important component.

Reflect Spiritual Beliefs

A superintendent stated that "because we are a Catholic school system our number one priority is to provide the best possible education that reflects our beliefs." In addition to providing higher quality religious education programs, it meant immersing the system in this philosophy because it permeated the whole jurisdiction; in fact, he stated "it's living and what we're about throughout the day." It was more than a program priority it was a "mega program" under which all other programs fell.

Chapter Summary

The priorities of the 13 superintendents for educational programs were coded under five major headings: academic, special needs, social, technological, and spiritual.

The academic category proved to be the major emphasis with the following priorities: implement the programs of Alberta Education properly, implement French, promote whole language orientation, promote the process approach, make all courses accessible to all students, develop complex learning skills, provide a general liberal education, and evaluate libraries.

Superintendents expressed a need to provide programs for those students who were experiencing learning difficulties and had social-emotional problems. They advocated the need for programs to help alleviate social problems, to develop communication skills, and to develop environmental awareness.

A limited number of superintendents expressed a need to deliver programs in the technological and spiritual areas.

In the follow-up interviews, superintendents generally were in agreement with the educational program priorities as reported.

Chapter 6

EFFECTIVENESS

This chapter presents the findings related to effectiveness, based on answers to Questions 2, 3, 10, 11, and 12 on the interview schedule:

2. What criteria (benchmarks, indicators) do you use to judge the overall effectiveness of your school system?

3. (a) What criteria do you use to judge your effectiveness as superintendent?
(b) What are the three main constraints (barriers, obstacles) which tend to reduce your effectiveness as superintendent?
(c) Please give some specific examples of how you have tried to reduce the impact of these constraints?

10. (a) What do you understand by the term "effective educational leadership"?
(b) By what methods do you attempt to demonstrate educational leadership in your school system?

11. (a) What are the most important factors that contribute to superintendent effectiveness?
(b) What relationship do you see between graduate study in education and superintendent effectiveness?
(c) What in-service activities in which you have been engaged have been most valuable in enhancing your effectiveness as superintendent?

12. In what ways do you consider that your administrative behavior is superior to that of superintendents who could be considered as less organizationally effective?

System Effectiveness Criteria

Superintendents used a variety of criteria, benchmarks, or indicators to judge the overall effectiveness of their school systems. These criteria and their frequencies are presented in Table 6.1. Responses were coded under five major headings: student performance, staff satisfaction/performance, public satisfaction, board performance, and other performance indicators. Most respondents reported criteria from all five major areas as important in the assessment of system performance.

Table 6.1

Frequency of Mention of Criteria Used to Judge the Effectiveness of School Systems

Criteria	f	Total
Student performance		
Level of student performance on achievement tests	13	
Level of student performance on diploma exams	13	
Level of student satisfaction on surveys	9	
Level of student performance on teacher-made tests	3	
Level of student performance on Canadian Test of Basic Skills	3	
Degree to which students are happy	2	
Number of students receiving provincial scholarships	2	
Degree to which student needs are being met	2	
Amount of student involvement in community activities	2	
Level of student confidence	1	
Degree to which students are kept on task	1	
Number of graduates who have successful careers	1	
Number of students enrolled in proportion to percentage served	1	
Overall climate of the school	1	
Percentage of dropouts	1	55
Staff satisfaction and performance		
Level of satisfaction as assessed through surveys	10	
Degree to which there is peace and harmony	6	
Type of relationship between board and staff	2	
Type of comments in board bulletins	1	
Degree to which staff and community interact	1	
Type of teacher discussions	1	
Amount of criticism teachers get during a strike	1	
Results of teacher evaluations	1	
Degree to which teachers are confident	1	
Type of relationship between staff and students	1	25
Public satisfaction		
Level of public satisfaction as informally assessed	12	
Level of public satisfaction as assessed through surveys	6	
Type of issues discussed in the local media	2	
Intensity of complaints received from parents	2	22
Board performance		
Degree to which the board accomplishes priorities	2	
Extent to which the board moves toward priorities	1	3

Table 6.1 (continued)

Frequency of Mention of Criteria Used to Judge the Effectiveness of School Systems

Criteria	f	Total
Other performance indicators		
Results of school evaluations	3	
Positive comments from Alberta Education	1	
Comparison with other jurisdictions of similar size	1	
Type of feedback from Alberta Teachers' Association	1	
Results from program evaluations	1	9
Total	112	112

Note. The number of criteria mentioned by superintendents ranged from 3 to 10.

Student Performance

All respondents noted that high student scores on provincial achievement tests and diploma exams were very significant indicators of overall district effectiveness. Twelve superintendents stated that students in their school systems were scoring at or above the provincial average on these two indicators. The results from these provincial assessments were monitored very closely. One stated, "We look at the data when it comes back to the school, we go through it with individual classroom teachers and school principals, and analyze the data to ascertain where our children stand relative to the whole province." A further comment was that, "we do a lot of tracking our student performance on these tests, we report them at length to the board, and we summarize them for the public."

While all superintendents acknowledged the importance and significance of these exams, a number expressed cautions about how they were used and their limitations. It was advocated that they be use in conjunction with other student achievement measures. One superintendent compared them to "taking the blood pressure of a patient, i.e., they did not provide a comprehensive enough evaluation to be assured of good health."

Two suggestions were made as to what to do if student scores were below the provincial average. One was for the superintendent to become personally concerned and consider high student performance on these exams a priority. Secondly was to take these concerns to teachers and "treat high scores on these tests as important, teachers will adjust their work accordingly, and students will score high." One respondent had a different view; he observed, "We have coached, advised, and encouraged the board to take a position that we certainly don't want to be the top in the province. The professional staff can deliver but kids pay a high price."

A number advocated being prudent in interpreting results. Students in some schools had experienced very high success rates, but only "the cream of the crop" were enrolled in the diploma courses. A number of superintendents expressed a desire to have approximately the same percentage of students enrolled locally as provincially before realistic comparisons could be made. One expressed it thus, "if we have 95% of our kids participating and somebody else has only 50%, then there's bound to be a considerable difference in outcome."

Scores on "teacher-made tests" were important criteria in measuring overall district effectiveness, according to three of the superintendents.

The Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) was used as an indicator in two systems. One superintendent commented on the usefulness of CTBS and stated "it may not be great but it gives an indication of where we're at." Another was skeptical about the relevance of these scores.

Student satisfaction surveys were administered in 69% of the school systems. These surveys were ordinarily included as part of the school evaluations and considered extremely important. Appropriate questions were devised for different age and grade levels. One superintendent considered the results from these questionnaires "the main" criteria for assessing system effectiveness. The responses were carefully recorded and summarized for ease of understanding.

Other student performance indicators were reported, but with less frequency. Two respondents were concerned about "keeping students happy," because it was one of the ways of building good morale, if students were happy they "produce good results." Two others felt that the amount of involvement by students in the community was a criterion upon which to judge overall system effectiveness. Students were encouraged to become involved in music festivals, young authors' programs, science fairs, and mathematics contests. Another felt "it was important to keep students on task. This required excellent teachers, who related well to students, and who maintained good control." One other school system kept track of its graduates; where they were, and the sorts of things they were doing. "We use that as an indicator to know whether we have been successful," reported the superintendent.

"The number of [provincial] scholarships are important" stated one respondent. This school system was apparently "getting more than our fair share of these scholarship dollars." This again was an indication of system success.

An indicator of system effectiveness for two superintendents was how well the individual needs and interests of students were catered to. One classified this as "equity of programming," which to him meant, meeting the needs of all students and not allowing gaps to exist.

In one small jurisdiction, "item banks" of topics to be accomplished by each student were developed for every subject area. Children were expected to move at their own rate from level to level. The speed at which the system was able to move students through these lists of items measured its success to some degree.

Two school systems operated in the same geographic area where open boundaries existed, i.e., students could move back and forth from one system to the other as parents saw fit. The percentage of students enrolled in an individual system should be proportional to the denominational background of the parents. If the percentage of students enrolled exceed that of the parents, it was taken as an indication that the system was more successful than its neighboring jurisdiction.

Overall climate of the school was a reliable indicator of system effectiveness according to one superintendent, although he stated, "We are unable to formally measure it yet." He postulated, "when you walk into a school you get a sense of the climate."

One superintendent believed that a higher than average percentage of dropouts was some indication of the failure of the system.

In summary, student achievement was considered a fundamental criterion upon which to judge the effectiveness of a school system. Achievement was assessed by utilizing hard and soft data. Hard objective data such as the level of student performance on provincially administered achievement tests and diploma exams were used to measure performance in all districts. Data from teacher-made tests and the Canadian Test of Basic Skills were not considered valid data upon which to measure district effectiveness. Data from satisfaction surveys were considered a very important indicator of district effectiveness in a majority of systems (69%).

A variety of "softer" criterion measures related to students were presented by the respondents. Criteria such as the confidence level, happiness, task focus, career success, number of provincial scholarships gained, involvement in community activities, school climate, and percentage of dropouts of were all important benchmarks of system success.

Staff Satisfaction/Performance

Staff satisfaction surveys were administered in 10 of the school systems. Positive feedback from these surveys was an indication of the overall effectiveness of systems. Boards administered questionnaires to teaching and non-teaching personnel, soliciting feedback on how well they were supported in fulfilling their jobs. One respondent stated, "There's a high degree of concern that we have good morale on our staff in order that positive relationships are fostered between student and teacher, teacher and secretary, and so on." The nature of these interactions were assessed by questionnaires.

Nearly half of the superintendents considered the degree to which there was peace and harmony in the system as important criteria upon which to judge its effectiveness. One maintained that peace and harmony was fostered by "being pro-active in settling disputes, and not let them build to the point of getting out of hand." In another system it was important to have contented and happy employees, whether they were caretakers, secretaries, or teaching staff. One superintendent remarked, "We work very hard at making people happy."

Superintendents "kept their ears to the ground" and were sensitive to any feedback which might have a negative effect on the system's performance. One respondent was attentive to the comments of employees in staff bulletins and of their potential for an overall negative effect. Another indicator of system effectiveness was the amount of staff community interaction. Staff were encouraged to attend as many community functions as possible.

One superintendent was sensitive to the type of teacher discussions. "Whether teachers are talking about kids or about teachers is an indication of how this system is achieving," he stated. When the issues discussed were all teacher issues, it was an indication that some of the important concerns of students were not addressed. One superintendent worked hard during a strike to communicate the board's view to the public but teachers weren't humiliated in the process.

Another criteria was to have " good relationships between the board and its staff." Good relationships between these two groups fostered motivation which resulted in the staff commitment.

Good working relationship between the board and the superintendent were important in achieving system effectiveness. Trustees must understand their role, they must be given good information upon which to base their decisions, and they must be given significant decisions to make.

A superintendent who was heavily involved in teacher evaluations saw them as indicators of system effectiveness. If most of these evaluations were honestly positive, then the system was experiencing success. Teachers needed this type of feedback and were assured by it.

Development of teacher confidence, enhanced by a conscious effort to upgrade and update them, was very important according to one respondent, because teachers felt somewhat overwhelmed, pressured, and often not sure when they were doing good jobs.

Effective systems according to one respondent "have excellent teachers who relate well to kids. Children are focused cn the task at hand, and are enjoying it."

In summary, superintendents considered the fostering of staff well being "as important criteria upon which to base system effectiveness." Staff opinions were solicited via comprehensive surveys and through board bulletins. Superintendents were also sensitive to the degree to which the staff and community interacted, the type of things teachers discussed in staff rooms, the degree to which there was peace and harmony throughout the system, the degree of concern and openness the board had for its staff, the results of teacher evaluations, teacher confidence in what they were doing, and the quality of the relationship between teachers and students were all considered by one or more respondents as valid criteria upon which to judge the effectiveness of an educational system.

Public Satisfaction

Ten of the superintendents considered the degree to which the public was satisfied to be an important indicator of the overall effectiveness of the system. One observed that, "I think parents are a benchmark as to how well kids are doing. If parents feel satisfied with what their kids are doing then we're not doing badly." Another stated, "we look at feedback from parents, from community members and consider that an indicator." Finally, another concluded that, "Parents generally felt good about their school, they were a little cooler about the system, but how they felt about their school was a good mind-set for the system."

The satisfaction level of parents was measured formally and informally. Formal feedback through questionnaire surveys was solicited in 46% of the school systems. The questionnaire data were analyzed and graphed, and the results presented to the trustees and eventually reported to the community. One superintendent was concerned about the low response rate on parental surveys, but consoled himself in the fact that "generally people feel we're doing well, if not, the number of responses would be much higher."

Unsolicited, informal feedback was frequently given by parents. One superintendent stated that "parental satisfaction is assessed by the number of issues trustees bring to board meetings." This same respondent indicated that, "If parents start talking to you and not to schools, then things are not going as well in the schools as they should." Another wanted the public to have confidence in what the schools were doing. Others were very aware of comments, complaints, and informal feedback given at school council meetings by parents. Two superintendents were concerned about the number of issues and the intensity with which they were discussed in the local meetings. One stated, "I am concerned about parent complaints, . . . and about concerns expressed through the media. I think it is an indicator [of system effectiveness]."

The degree and intensity to which the public attacked the system was an indication of their confidence in it, thereby reflecting its perceived effectiveness.

In summary, the level of public satisfaction in the system was perceived to indicate its effectiveness. Public impressions of the system were formally solicited through surveys and questionnaires but, on other occasions, these impressions were casually given by trustees, through the local media, and by direct individual parental involvement if the system was perceived to be ineffective.

Board Performance

Board performance was perceived by one superintendents to be consequential to the effectiveness of the school system. Decisions made by boards as well as staff and public relationships with the board were relevant factors. Board performance was measured by the degree to which the board moved toward and accomplished its established priorities. One superintendent discussed product and process effectiveness. Process effectiveness was "moving toward the goals of the organization, while product effectiveness was "having achieved them." In terms of process, this board engaged itself in an annual retreat, looked at its priorities, and asked itself the following question: "Have we achieved our priorities, or are we moving in the right direction?"

Another superintendent thought that how he worked with the board was crucial. He stated, "I think it's very important that trustees understand their role and that I give them good information to make their own decisions; they're their decisions and they should be allowed to make them." He went on to say that, "during the board meetings we keep our mouths shut until we're asked to speak and then we lay the background out for them." An effective board was one that was not only in control, but was seen to be in control.

Other Performance Indicators

Several other criteria were given as indicators of system effectiveness. Some superintendents felt that the effectiveness of the whole system could be judged by accumulating the results of individual school evaluations. One stated, "We use school evaluations as a way of judging the effectiveness of the system." Another asked parents during school evaluations "How satisfied are you with your child's teacher, your child's principal, your child's school, your board, and your superintendent?" Levels of satisfaction in all of these areas were used as benchmarks to indicate system success.

Two superintendents felt that being chosen for this study indicated that somebody considered them effective, and by implication, their systems were effective. One respondent remarked, "When you say that I've been selected as one of probably many superintendents that have been described as effective, you know that makes me feel good, and that our school system is probably doing something right." The other stated that "Comments made by people like yourself, who came to visit our system, who have an opportunity to go into our schools, and who come back and say, that seemed to be a good place to work, are benchmarks of success."

One superintendent noted that positive comments from Alberta Education were an indicator of system success. He observed when Alberta Education indicated that, "We're one of the top five systems in Alberta that's promoting computers and technology in the classrooms, it's subjective, but it makes me feel we're doing something right." Another felt that his system could be judged effective or ineffective by how well it measured up against other similar sized jurisdictions in the province. He suggested relevant comparisons could be made by examining student scores on diploma exams and achievement tests. Yet another respondent noted that a "soft type" data, measuring systems effectiveness was "through talking with our union people and receiving positive feedback." There appeared to be a close working relationship between this superintendent and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Finally, in another school system two programs were evaluated in depth every year throughout the whole system. The superintendent emphasized that, "we ask parents and teachers about their support for these programs." If parents were satisfied with the programs, it was taken as a degree of satisfaction with the whole school system.

Summary

Criteria used to judge the overall effectiveness of school systems were coded under five major headings: student performance; staff satisfaction/performance; public satisfaction; board performance; and other performance indicators.

Student scores on provincially administered achievement tests and diploma exams were used by all superintendents to judge the overall effectiveness of their school systems. Student responses to board-administered satisfaction surveys were benchmarks of system success or otherwise in nine systems. These surveys were often conducted by independent surveyors to project a sense of objectivity. Indicators of less frequency were student performance on teacher-made tests (three systems) and The Canadian Test of Basic Skills (three). Superintendents considered softer measures such as student confidence, student happiness, degree to which students were kept on task, student career success, number of provincial scholarships received, accommodation of student needs, amount of student involvement in community activities, overall climate, and the percentage of dropouts as criteria upon which to judge district performance.

Staff satisfaction as assessed through system surveys was highly regarded as valid criterion upon which to judge the effectiveness of educational systems. According to these superintendents a direct correlation existed between staff satisfaction and system performance. The degree of peace and harmony among its staff was a strong indication that the system was effective. Occurring with less frequency were such indicators as the type of comments staff made publicly, the amount of interaction between the staff and the community, the type of teacher discussions, the amount of criticism directed at teachers during a strike, the relationship between the board and its staff, the results of teacher evaluations, the perceived confidence level of teachers, and the types of relationships between students and teachers.

Both solicited and unsolicited public responses were important in assessing the overall effectiveness of school systems. Superintendents also thought that the types of issues discussed in the local media and the number of parental complaints indicated how effective the system was seen by the public.

If boards were able to accomplish their priorities, they were considered to be effective.

Other criteria used to measure system success were positive comments from Alberta Education, performance in comparison with other similar jurisdictions, positive feedback from members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, results of school evaluations, and the results from system-wide program evaluations.

During the follow-up interviews one superintendent noted that Table 6.1 did not include the evaluation of the system, a process in which many boards were involved.

Superintendent Effectiveness Criteria

Superintendents used formal and informal criteria; solicited and unsolicited information in judging their own effectiveness. The criteria are shown in Table 6.2. Formal criteria were the boards' annual formal assessments. The board distributed questionnaires to parents, staff, and sometimes students soliciting responses related to the superintendent's performance. These questionnaires were modified so as the different target groups could comprehend questions. In addition, most of these same target groups provided unsolicited feedback. Also superintendents relied heavily on intuition, "pulse-reading," and "gut-level feelings" to give them an indication of how effective they were perceived by important stakeholders.

Board and Trustee Evaluations

Chief executive officers were evaluated annually in 92% of the jurisdictions. The performances of the superintendents were judged by using their job descriptions as a measuring instrument. An examination of these documents revealed some variations, but common trends existed. Most opening statements designated superintendents as the chief executive officers. Although superintendents' responsibilities were classified in a number of ways, most job descriptions could be coded under the following major categories: leadership, supervision, administration, financial management, public relations, communication, and evaluation. These major responsibility areas were then partitioned into key tasks of measurable action statements. For example, the key task of "providing for the supervision and improvement of educational programs through regular evaluations of programs and services" would be placed under the major category of supervision. Superintendents were generally expected to discharge their responsibilities in a manner consistent with sound educational and administrative practices, pertinent statutes, regulations and procedures of the government of the province, policies and regulations of the board, and the provisions of any collective agreements which the board had with its different employee groups. They were expected to delegate responsibility and authority to district employees; however, final accountability for delegated tasks resided with the superintendent. The organizational charts, depicting lines of authority, varied depending on the size of the jurisdiction and the superintendent's preference. An example of a school system's organizational chart is presented in Table 6.1.

In this chart, the secretary-treasurer and the three assistant superintendents were directly responsible to the superintendent, while the consultants were responsible and accountable to the assistant superintendents and only had indirect responsibility to the CEO. Principals in this structure had many "masters," including the superintendent.

Although 92% of boards evaluated and provided feedback to CEOs annually, many CEOs expressed a reluctance of trustees to perform this function. Evaluations occurred largely at the superintendents' insistence. They were heavily involved in developing their own job descriptions and often had to "push" trustees into giving them feedback. One expressed the view that, "I have my job description, they've [trustees] been given my role, they've been asked to rate me on the different parts of that role, but they aren't really comfortable with that." Another indicated that, "The board evaluates me on an annual basis in terms of my job description; that's one of the things trustees hate." This same respondent proceeded to say, "It's largely at my initiative that the evaluation by the board takes place at all." In one system, the superintendent provided the trustees with a format and a checklist, but he stated, "The board is very reluctant even to do that."

Sometimes trustees did not take the evaluation of superintendents as seriously as superintendents desired. One stated, "I meet with them individually because quite often if you give them a statement they won't read it." To compensate for this, he spent time with each trustee and engaged them in individual discussions of his strengths and weaknesses. However, one respondent reported that, "The evaluation process had been quite positive,

Table 6.2

Frequency of Mention of Criteria Used to Judge the Effectiveness of Superintendents

Criteria	**f**
Annual formal board evaluations	12
Formal and informal feedback from parents	11
Informal feedback from teachers	10
Informal feedback from principals	9
Informal feedback from trustees	8
Informal feedback from central office staff	8
Successful implementation of board policies, goals, and priorities	5
Performance relative to superintendents in similar circumstances	1
Number of contacts with schools	1
Degree of success in dealing with complaints	1
Forthrightness when dealing with problems	1
Sensitivity to stakeholder feelings	1
Responsiveness to personnel feelings	1
Ability to change the system without creating a crisis	1
Total	70

Note. The number of criteria mentioned by superintendents ranged from 3 to 8.

trustees were honest, and if there were one or two things they'd like me to do differently they'd say so."

In addition to receiving feedback from the board collectively, superintendents often solicited and received feedback from individual trustees. Sometimes this was given at board meetings, while on other occasions it was presented in a more informal atmosphere. It occurred at dinners, over coffee, or just in casual conversations.

The corporate assessments of superintendents by boards were conducted in a number of ways. In one system, the trustees got together privately and developed a written assessment. In another, each trustee was given a checklist to complete privately, after which they met as as group to develop the board's corporate statement. A number of superintendents insisted that they be given corporate statements to offset individual and often conflicting reports from each trustee which left superintendents confused and perplexed. Because if not, one stated, "Quite often the statement is somebody said this, somebody said that, then eventually it's the board said it, but when you talk to them individually you find out there is disagreement." Even though this occurred, the superintendent acknowledged that, "it's a good way of finding out what they're thinking, so you know where you stand and which problems you will have to deal with."

Others felt that they could ascertain the amount of confidence the board had in them by listening carefully to the informal feedback of teachers. In one system, in addition to sending questionnaires to key informants, the trustees examined the superintendent's job description and sent it out to principals for feedback. Generally, superintendents felt that they were evaluated every day by trustees, at every meeting, and on every action they took. In summary, superintendents were evaluated formally every year by trustees. These formal evaluations often resulted in corporate statements. Boards were encouraged to have and sometimes helped in the development of superintendents' job descriptions. Evaluations were reluctantly conducted, although most superintendents valued formal written feedback.

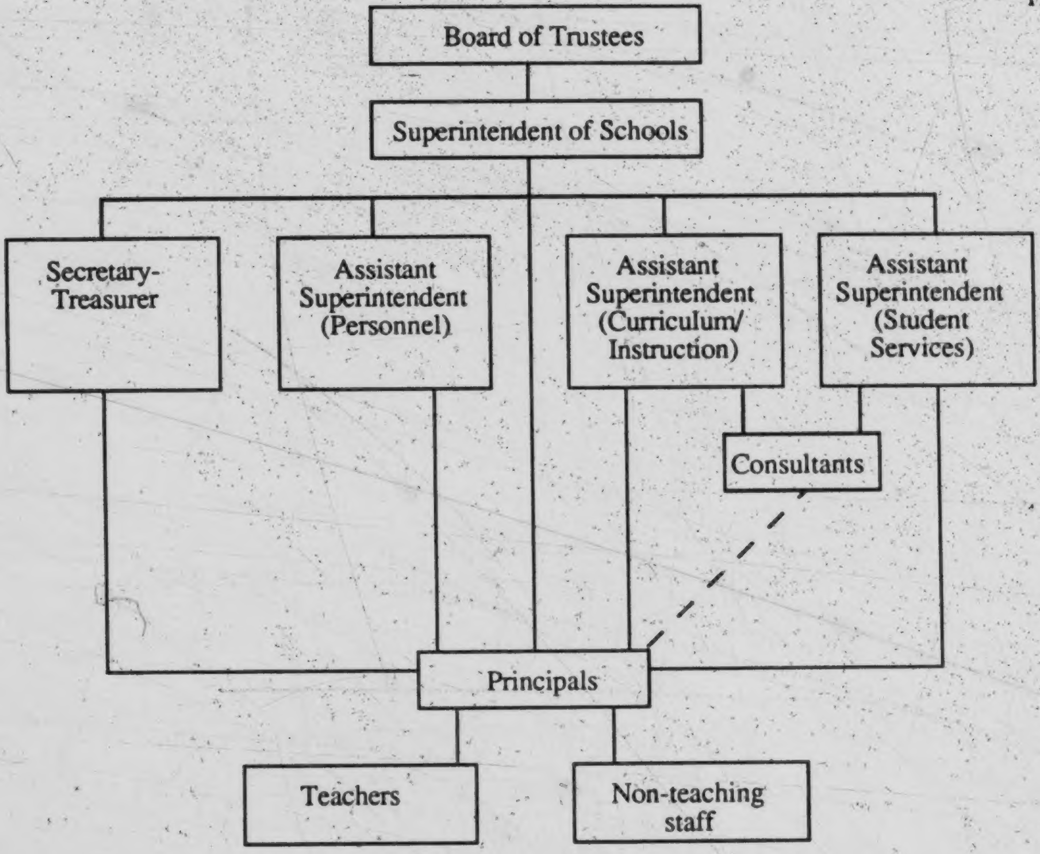
Board of Trustees
Superintendent of Schools
Secretary-Treasurer
Assistant Superintendent (Personnel)
Assistant Superintendent (Curriculum/ Instruction)
Assistant Superintendent (Student Services)
Consultants
Principals
Teachers
Non-teaching staff

Figure 6.1. School Systems Organizational Chart (Example)

In addition to feedback from formal evaluations, superintendents were sensitive to individual trustee comments at board meetings and elsewhere. Each year superintendents held evaluation sessions with their boards where they were given indications about how the board assessed their performance. It was often difficult for superintendents to separate their own performance from that of the boards. One stated, "How the system performs . . . is a direct correlation with how I perform." Another had the system evaluated to see how things were going for the superintendent.

Parental Feedback

In judging their own effectiveness, 85% of the superintendents thought that feedback from parents was an important criterion. Solicited feedback was obtained from questionnaires, system evaluations, and comments at meetings, while unsolicited comments were made at different times and under a variety of circumstances. Superintendents considered both types of feedback important in formulating an assessment of their own effectiveness. Some superintendents reported that they were the specific focus of some of the questions on these parental surveys. One emphasized, "I'm identified as a superintendent on these surveys, and people are encouraged to pass judgments on me." One respondent, however, issued a caution in interpreting the results of parent surveys. He remarked, "I came out quite high on the results from our staff but many parents felt the question was not applicable because they weren't sure what my role was," even though this superintendent resided in a small school system. He observed that, "In general, if parents are satisfied with their child's teacher then they're satisfied with the school, the principal, and the superintendent."

In addition to receiving feedback from questionnaires, superintendents considered feedback of a less formal nature. One got an indication of how the community was feeling through the number of complaints given. Another relied "simply on the odd comments that parents made relative to how things were going generally." Another operated at a "gut level;" if he got negative feedback he was concerned. This superintendent listened to the "vibes." In the event of negative vibrations, he took a positive stance by attempting to do things differently in future, with a view to having proposals accepted rather than rejected. Superintendents were concerned about how they were perceived publicly. This public perception whether solicited or unsolicited, and whether communicated formally or informally was a benchmark used by superintendents to judge the degree of their success.

Staff Feedback

Eight superintendents sought and received feedback from central office personnel regarding their performance, nine mentioned that this occurred for principals, and 10 for teachers.

Feedback from central office staff was solicited and informal, except in one case where the superintendent distributed a questionnaire asking for their feedback on his performance. Initially staff were surprised with this approach, but they quickly got used to it, "when they realized that I wanted serious feedback." He noted "they were quite capable of giving professional and honest feedback." Another superintendent held a meeting with each person at the central office and engaged them in a discussion of his priorities. He acknowledged that it was difficult for these people to tell him what to do because he was personally affected. However, he dealt with this issue indirectly by asking them "what priorities need to be worked on within the system" rather than things that he should do personally as a superintendent

A majority (69%) of the superintendents solicited feedback from principals in judging their own effectiveness. Principals were issued questionnaires during system evaluations. In addition to obtaining feedback from these formal surveys, superintendents frequently solicited their counsel to determine if the directions taken by the system were indeed appropriate. One superintendent met with principals prior to board meetings and retreats and asked them "what were the most important things that needed to be worked on from a systems level, rather than asking them what do you think I should be doing, because they would have a hard time answering me directly." Another respondent periodically asked principals how they thought present practices and processes could be improved. Superintendents solicited direct feedback from principals on their performance but realized that most of them had difficulty in giving them the absolute truth about their performance.

In 77% of the cases, superintendents invited feedback from teachers via questionnaires aimed at evaluating school systems. Superintendents considered themselves an integral part of system evaluations. In addition to this formal feedback, some superintendents became very conscious of informal teacher feedback especially during teacher/trustee meetings. One stated that, "If your teachers feel good about what you are doing, they will be open and willing to talk to you about problems, and also about the good things." He added that, "I think you can judge your performance informally by that kind of response."

Success in Implementing Board Policies, Priorities, and Goals

Some superintendents (38%) considered themselves effective if they could successfully implement board policies, i.e., if they could move the organization towards the accomplishment of board goals and priorities. Goals ranged from the general to very specific. After these goals were established, superintendents became heavily involved in their articulation by stating them clearly and succinctly. Setting goals was clearly the responsibility of trustees, because it was their responsibility to determine the general direction in which the system was headed. Developing policies was the first step in operationalizing these goals. Policies were defined by one respondent as "guides to discretionary action." Trustees accepted responsibility for formulating policy, but in so doing they often sought advice from their chief executive officers.

One superintendent felt it was his primary duty "to implement the policies of the board." He felt that to be effective he had to go beyond simple policy implementation and act as a "censor" of board policy. This, to him, meant monitoring the policy to ascertain whether or not it was reasonable, and then advising the board whether or not the goal was worth striving for.

One superintendent felt very adept at performing the day-to-day functions but advocated that superintendents were only effective when they could implement the priorities of the board in the long term. In one system the board annually evaluated the superintendent with regard to goal implementation; this included both system and personal goals.

Other Criteria

One superintendent measured his effectiveness by the time he spent in the schools. He did a lot of "pulse reading," kept a diary of meetings, visits, contacts, and meticulously recorded each day's activities. After school visits, and he reflected upon major themes, and upon his own effectiveness. He stated, "I write about my interactions, I find it very useful to reflect at the end of the day . . . just to unwind." This superintendent made approximately 200 visits to schools per year. While he was in schools he visited teachers in their classrooms for short periods of time. Also, any staff members who left the system were given the superintendent's personal appreciation for their services. When new teachers were hired, the superintendent got to know all their names, visited them in their classrooms, and associated with them. He noted that teachers expressed appreciation of this personal attention. The respondent stated, "it isn't much of an evaluation [of my performance] but when you hear it a hundred times that this contact is appreciated, you know it had somewhat of a total effect, and it is probably just as valid as anything else."

Another respondent compared the performance of his system to other similar systems. While attending meetings of CASS (Conference of Alberta School Superintendents) he found out whether or not his system was doing similar things to others. He felt that, "If we're doing the things other people are doing, then I think we're reasonably effective, but if we're doing them before others then I think maybe we're ahead of the game."

It was incumbent upon the superintendent to deal effectively with complaints from staff and the general public about the effectiveness of the system. One superintendent emphasized, "if there's something dysfunctional someplace, . . . you go at it and straighten it out." Effectiveness was judged on how appropriately complaints were handled.

One superintendent noted that a benchmark of his effectiveness was evident in the honesty and forthrightness in which he dealt with problems. He acknowledged it was difficult for him and others to tell people directly that they had failed to accomplish some task. The simple approach, he advocated was "you simply ask them to do it right." Overall this superintendent stated that, "he was effective if he informed the board on matters of interest, prepared and presented the annual budget, secured and maintained a capable staff, and acted on behalf of the board on urgent matters."

One superintendent spent as much time as he could being concerned about people, listening, trying to understand, and sympathizing with them if necessary. He visited staff if they were ill, sent notes, letters, congratulations, and thank-yous. This being a larger school system, it had a department which attended to staff and public relations but the superintendent admitted he did a lot himself.

Another superintendent felt that he could only be an effective leader if he had people who are willing to work with his leadership, his style, and his vision.

Finally, superintendents had to cope with rapid changes. These changes often developed into crisis situations. One stated, "Effective superintendents move with change and handle crises in such a manner that the negative effect on the system is minimal."

Summary

Superintendents were very much aware and concerned about their own personal effectiveness and struggled to find ways and means of improving and measuring it. As chief executive officers they took responsibility for the overall effectiveness of their systems, i.e., if the the superintendent was effective then the system was probably effective. A general criterion then of superintendent effectiveness was system effectiveness.

During the follow-up interviews, most superintendents indicated that the criteria upon which their performance was judged had been presented in their evaluation documents, which were presented at the initial interviews. Some noted that three methods were used in their evaluations: (a) measured against pre-set criteria, (b) judged in accordance with the accomplishments of agreed upon goals, and (c) a combination of (a) and (b). In addition to the criteria noted in the documents, superintendents proposed the following questions: am I getting the job done in terms of achieving board priorities; am I providing sound advice; am I respected by the various constituencies; am I trusted; do I visit school sites frequently; do I portray the image of a chief executive officer; do I have good interpersonal skills; can I relate to the various constituents; can I communicate the board's position; am I open and honest; and does the board have confidence in me?

Constraints

Nine superintendents presented three constraints, three presented two, and one presented one, for a total of 34. The frequencies of mention of these constraints upon the effectiveness of superintendents are shown in Table 6.3. The methods of reducing them are shown in Table 6.4.

Political

Political expediency, different political agendas, increased political involvement, political interference, and lack of role clarification by boards were terms used to describe

Table 6.3

Frequency of Mention of Constraints Upon Superintendent Effectiveness

Constraint	f
Political	6
Time	5
Financial	5
Oversized agenda	4
Overbearing bureaucracy	2
Inability to move with rate of change	2
Remoteness	1
Weak personnel links	1
Reticence to act	1
Social problems	1
Lack of cooperation among stakeholders	1
Uninformed trustees	1
Lack of board confidence	1
Inability to mobilize local resources	1
Teachers' association rules	1
Lack of contact with schools	1
Total	34

Note. Although superintendents were asked to present three constraints, only 9 presented 3, while 3 presented 2, and 1 presented 1.

Table 6.4

Methods Used to Reduce the Impact of Constraints

Political

Arranging role clarification in-service sessions for trustees.
Clearly distinguishing between the board's and the superintendents' role. (mentioned by five superintendents.)
Continually distinguishing between policy making and administration.
Emphasizing a team approach.
Emphasizing that your assistants are not the board's assistants.
Expressing feelings openly.
Keeping everybody informed as much as possible.
Letting the board play its role.
Providing sound and convincing arguments.
Urging trustees to attend educational conferences.
Using examples of others.
Using reputable research.
Working closely with board chairman.

Time

Delegating to capable people.
Giving oneself thinking time.
Having an understanding family.
Keeping assistant superintendents informed.
Reading pertinent literature.
Refusing to accept phone calls until ready.
Setting priorities.
Taking time-management courses.
Using a cellular phone while driving.
Using a dictaphone while driving.
Using computers and electronic mail.
Working longer hours.

Financial

Deciding upon priorities.
Explaining problems clearly to Alberta Education.
Involving other office staff in budgeting.
Involving principals in budgeting.
Lobbying the government.
Meeting with politicians.
Monitoring employee numbers carefully.
Providing information to trustees.
Working staff whose services were not terminated, harder and longer.

Table 6.4 (continued)

Methods Used to Reduce the Impact of Constraints

Oversized agenda

Allocating principals' administrative time.
Contracting services.
Delegating to principals.
Delegating to the administrative team.
Developing policies.
Giving people scope to do their jobs.
Lowering the expectations of trustees.
Providing in-service programs for the administrative team.
Restructuring the administrative team.
Setting priorities.

Overbearing bureaucracy

Encouraging the board to take an aggressive stance with Alberta Education.
Knowing people.
Taking an aggressive stance.
Understanding the roles of Alberta Education's personnel.

Inability to move with rate of change

Being involved in professional development activities.
Convincing people to stick with the plan.
Involving oneself with academic institutions.
Moving with educational developments.
Narrowing the field of operation.
Planning with a view to identifying priorities.
Reading current literature.
Visiting other school systems.

Remoteness

Acting quickly.
Keeping up to date with new programs.
Sending teachers to quality in-service programs elsewhere.
Supporting professional development.

Table 6.4 (continued)

Methods Used to Reduce the Impact of Constraints

Weak personnel links

- Bringing the problem into focus.
- Clearly demonstrating to "weak links" that they have not performed in accordance with expectations.
- Deciding on an action plan.
- Discussing the weakness.
- Meeting frequently with "weak links."
- Setting clear goals.
- Supporting "weak links."

Social problems

- Allocating more time to problems.
- Assigning teacher aides to classrooms.
- Dealing with the homes.
- Establishing alternative programs.
- Establishing personnel positions to address these problems.
- Involving other agencies.

Lack of cooperation among stakeholders

- Creating awareness among principals.
- Encouraging voluntarism.
- Promoting partnership.

Uninformed trustees

- Arranging trustee development sessions.
- Informing trustees of the legislation.
- Spending time explaining the system.

Lack of board confidence

- Arranging for orientation programs for new trustees.
- Discussing roles and responsibilities at meetings.
- Simulating real-life scenarios.

Inability to mobilize local resources

- Building support bases.
- Establishing networks and linkages.
- Interacting with staff in staff rooms.
- Meeting parent groups periodically.
- Visiting schools on a regular basis.

Table 6.4 (continued)

Methods Used to Reduce the Impact of Constraints

Teachers' association rules

Advising the board not to say something offensive.
Communicating frequently with association officials.
Co-opting teaching personnel into the board's position.
Talking to key association advisors.

Lack of contact with schools

Keeping in touch with principals.
Visiting schools more frequently.

Note. Each method of reducing the impact of constraints was mentioned once "except clearly distinguish between the boards' and the superintendents' role."

the process of educational decision-making where other than sound pedagogical arguments seemed to make a difference. There were a number of instances, where superintendents were convinced, on the basis of logic and research, that a certain focus or policy was educationally sound, but it was not implemented for political reasons. One superintendent stated, "trustees being the people they are, sometimes make political decisions . . . they have their constituents to watch."

In some cases individual trustees had different political agendas than the corporate board. The superintendent of one system stated, "We've had a history here of a trustee really heavily involved in the day-to-day business. He's taken a lot of time and its been really devastating to people's success in their jobs." He added, "I've worked with him but to no avail. In the last year we have a new chairman, and that's made life easier for myself and other people."

In a number of cases, boards were seeking increased political involvement in the operation of school systems. This involvement placed demands on superintendents to supply more relevant information. A respondent reported, "Trustees want information organized in different ways, they have an insatiable appetite for information, they want it organized horizontally, vertically, etc., etc." One remarked, "It's worth the effort if it keeps their support and confidence level up, but you wonder sometimes, if you're not in the area of the law of diminishing returns, and that the effort is much greater than pay-back." Superintendents often worked closely with board chairmen outside of regular meetings to ascertain what kinds and amounts of information were appropriate.

Trustees were elected to boards for three-year terms. When trustees changed, the political climate of boards often changed. It was observed that some trustees aspired to boards for their own particular reasons and these were not necessarily educational. One lamented, "Sometimes you get a board that is continually bickering with each other and they do not push toward the same objective." He realized that in this case, "you have to walk a very delicate tightrope." Boards were not viewed as inconsequential, their vibrations and decisions were felt throughout the whole system, which certainly could have a devastating effect upon the superintendent.

Trustees of boards were elected to promote the cause of education, and the public which they served. Sometimes "sound educational practices" and the will of the public conflicted. Superintendents often had to mediate and help trustees to achieve a delicate, and sometimes tenuous balance between educational and political issues. That reasonable balance was achieved by being up-front with trustees and by not hiding their feelings on issues. One superintendent stated "when I believe in something, I go all out no matter what energy and time it takes." There was a great determination on the part of superintendents to convince boards of the need for change by providing them sound and convincing arguments. One respondent stated, "I want people to change their minds because of what I actually say, not by my smoothness in saying it."

One was so concerned about role clarification that he attempted to offset some of the confusion when he was interviewed for the job. He stated, "When they interviewed me for the position I think I interviewed them."

Many superintendents acknowledged that the distinction between legislative and administrative functions were often arbitrary. Boards were strongly urged to restrict themselves as much as possible to policy making and to dealing with larger issues. The implementation of policies and administrivia was considered the responsibility of board staffs. One stated, "We want trustees to come to meetings and be prepared to exert their energies on larger issues and let the 'nitty gritty' stay with us." Another was more abrupt, "Sometimes you just have to tell them they're getting into administration and they should butt out." He gave the following typical example to illustrate his point . A board member who received complaints from parents relative to the safety conditions of a bus felt he should ride on the vehicle to investigate these parental concerns. The superintendent stated, "I had to take him aside and tell him that's not your job, we pay good money to people to ride buses."

Superintendents strongly urged and actively helped trustees to keep themselves updated and "in tune" with educational developments in Alberta and Canada. As a result, trustees' attendance at conferences, at considerable cost to taxpayers, sometimes received criticism from the community. As well as educating trustees, another positive aspect of attending these conferences was the enlightenment of trustees about their own system practices; when they realized that the same things were being done elsewhere, they gained a sense of being on the right track.

A team approach to decision making was proposed as a means of reducing political interference. The team consisted of the board, the superintendent, and others. A superintendent stated "you have to work together." This team approach was used to help boards define their mandates and sort out the various administrative roles. One respondent stated, "You have to emphasize to the trustees that the assistant superintendents are my assistants and not the boards."

In summary, this balance between administration and legislation was achieved by spending considerable time with boards, and clearly demonstrating their role and the staff's role. One superintendent considered this to be "one of the toughest jobs" he had to perform. Trustees considered themselves leaders, a superintendent stated, "They don't want to come in here and suddenly lose that; they want to change things; they have an important role to play, let them play it; they make the policy, you advise them on it, and you carry it out."

Time

Unavailability of time to perform the various tasks was reported as a constraint by slightly less than 40% of the superintendents. Lack of time was a barrier to completing tasks at a satisfactory level. Some respondents expressed a need to perform tasks with more completeness than time permitted. One lamented, "I suffer from a great weakness, I call it the weakness for completeness, i.e., when you do something you do it well and you do it completely." Often superintendents were expected to be in two places at the same time. One noted, "Board members and parents expect me to be at the office when they drop in, at the same time teachers expect me to be in schools." They were constantly trying to balance their time among the different constituent groups. One observed

> my work week is 60 hours, I spend a lot of time in meetings, I spend a lot of time interacting with trustees, I don't spend as much time as I would like working with principals and assistant superintendents.

Superintendents had developed various ways of coping with time constraints. Two had taken time management courses, but expressed only moderate satisfaction with their usefulness. One remarked, "I have to do what everybody else has to do, that is, establish priorities every morning and do your best to meet them."

Secretaries, assistant superintendents, and principals were frequently delegated duties by the superintendent. One observed, "I delegate a lot to my secretary and I work closely with my assistant superintendent ensuring that we compare notes." It was relatively easy to delegate in cases where the assistants were "in tune" with what the superintendent was thinking; long periods of explaining could be avoided. Another remarked, "I don't have any hesitation in delegating responsibilities to people and asking them to fill in for me; I'm not the type of person who has to be involved in all decisions." After delegating, this superintendent made himself available for advice, but his assistants didn't need his approval for every decision.

In order to cope with the heavy time demands, most superintendents felt compelled to work long hours. Some did not have any set hours. One stated, "I put in as much time as is needed; I work on an average 3 nights per week on school business and often on weekends." Superintendents had many issues crossing their desks daily, because of this, they did not have time to "think clearly or plan during the day," they therefore, had to often work at night.

A variety of automated electronic aids were used by superintendents to more efficiently use their time. Computers, dictaphones, cellular telephones, and electronic mail systems were all used to conserve energy and time. One stated, "I have a dictaphone, I use it whenever I'm driving, and I've got a cellular phone, so I make phone calls when I'm driving, driving time is my work time, and I've learned to do it in a safe manner." Superintendents working in districts with considerable driving distances between schools or to major centers, used their driving time to respond to correspondence and draft reports. To conserve time, another used electronic and voice mail systems to communicate with all trustees at the same time.

Another way of coping with the demands for more time was to hold all telephone calls until it was convenient for the superintendent to respond.

A number felt that having an understanding family who supported them in their long hours of commitment, was essential.

In summary, superintendents had numerous demands placed upon their time. They coped with these demands by enrolling in time management courses, reading widely on time management and the effective handling of responsibilities, using electronic aids, delegating to capable personnel, using driving time as working time, working longer hours, establishing priorities, and having an understanding family.

Financial

Lack of adequate board financing was a constraint for 38% of the superintendents. There were mixed feelings on the gravity of this constraint. One superintendent reported that, "We've been in a period of restraint for a number of years . . . we're at a point now where financially we just can't do some of the things we'd like to be able to do." Another stated, "I would not put them [financial constraints] at the top of the list at all, we've had some cutbacks but we're still doing well." Lack of financial support did not appear to be a serious obstacle to offering a quality educational program in several systems.

Superintendents attempted to overcome this constraint by ensuring that boards were made fully aware of the negative consequences of any tax increases. Comparable information relative to other systems was presented to trustees to equip them to face irate tax payers or businessmen who promulgated the attitude that their businesses were failing because they were overtaxed by school authorities. Principals and central office personnel were involved in budget decisions so that they would "buy into" the end result and eventually "get better value for money spent." Superintendents and chairmen lobbied MLAs and made representations to Alberta Education, clearly demonstrating to them the financial situation of the boards and the consequences of any changes in funding policies.

Excessive amounts of educational budgets are expended on salaries. Boards generally have very little discretionary money unless they are willing to reduce the number of staff. They monitored their pupil/teacher ratios very carefully. Adding or decreasing teaching units caused significant variations in costs. One superintendent stated, "Sometimes I don't think we need all the consultants or assistants we think we need." Numbers and categories of staff, then, were monitored very carefully, with sensitivity, to the positive or negative effects which changes might have on the quality of education.

Oversized Agenda

The constraint of an oversized agenda was closely related to the "lack of time." Of the superintendents 31% were concerned about the size of their agendas, i.e., the number of issues and problems confronted concurrently. With the limited time available, it was impossible to do all that was required. One superintendent stated, "People want me to do more teacher evaluations . . . but at the same time they want me to do everything else." The superintendent of a small school system stated, "I'm supposed to be an expert in everything, pupil, personnel, and curriculum." Another referred to the tremendous amount of paperwork which accumulated especially when he was absent from the office for any period of time.

The size of the agenda was managed by selecting priorities, pursuing them, and delegating to other staff members. Staffs were then given the scope and authority to perform their tasks. Assistant superintendents, secretary treasurers, and principals were often on the receiving end of these delegations. One superintendent stated, "Principals have really taken on a bigger load and they've been given administrative time to perform these functions."

All four of the above superintendents encouraged the development of policies to avoid duplication, which helped to control the oversized agenda. To reduce the pressure, superintendents impressed upon their boards that certain things had to be left undone. Highly trained and competent secretaries lessened the workloads of superintendents. As with the time constraints, superintendents used driving time, dictaphones, cellular phones, computers, and electronic mail as well as worked long hours to cope with the volume of activities expected of them.

Overbearing Bureaucracy

Frustration with the bureaucratic structure of Alberta Education was a constraint for two of the respondents. These superintendents had to deal with departmental officials on many issues such as curriculum, capital funding, grant applications, and many others. One superintendent from a small system felt that department officials "didn't understand the demands being placed on school jurisdictions from all areas of the bureaucracy."

One other superintendent expressed problems in working with Alberta Education, especially on human rights cases. Special education placement appeals, consumed considerable staff time and energy. In addition to this, protest groups were springing up all around the country, adding pressure and consuming valuable time. Superintendents had to be aware of the actual decisions that were made, and also ensure that "due process" was followed. He further stated, "We're starting to look over our shoulders, and anticipating that, even some of the quick little decisions are going to be appealed."

Superintendents coped with the overbearing bureaucracy by becoming more aggressive and pointed in raising their concerns. Other ways were to clearly understand the networking, to get to know the individuals, and to have a clear understanding of their roles. They were then able to approach the appropriate sources and get correct, expedient answers.

Relative to the long appeal process, the board made representation to Alberta Education and requested that they not engage in a promotion campaign, thereby, encouraging unnecessary appeals. The superintendent stated

> we tried to impress upon the Minister the need to tone it down a little . . . I'm a person who believes in human rights and want people to have their day in court,' but it's now burdened us to the point where our systems are going to break down because of those sorts of problems.

Inability to Move With the Rate of Change

Adapting to rapid changes presented a challenge for two superintendents. One felt the "need to be principled but also adaptable, flexible, and able to move with changing scenarios in the work place." Chief executive officers were often thrust into situations where they had to be reactive because changes were occurring so rapidly it had passed them by.

Ways of managing this rapid change were to attend conferences, visits other school jurisdictions, read recent research, become personally involved in professional development, and enroll in university programs. One stated, "for the past five years, I've taken either a two or three week university course or became involved in some type of intensive staff professional development activity every summer." He further stated, "I make it a point to read 10 books per year related to leadership in education."

In another system, the board restricted the number of activities which the staff became involved in any given year. This system developed a list of priorities and concentrated on them. They had to ignore some of the things that emerged or came at them unexpectedly. He felt, "It was a matter of using the planning process to determine what's most important and then convince people to stick with the plan."

Remoteness

One small school system, situated a considerable distance from any major center, was seriously constrained because of its remoteness. The superintendent felt the system was isolated and tended to ignore what was happening elsewhere.

The board attempted to overcome this constraint by supporting and funding the cost of teachers to attend professional development activities in other parts of the province. Teachers tried to keep up to date with new programs by acting quickly when changes occurred.

Weak Personnel Links

One superintendent acknowledged that his effectiveness depended upon the performance of the people with whom he worked. He noted that

> If there is a weak link in the chain then that certainly is a barrier to my effectiveness. There are only certain times when people are weak, and it is then you have to work with them to help them over these hurdles.

In attempts to help ineffective personnel, the superintendent met with them and attempted to bring their weakness clearly in focus. After the issue was identified, he engaged them in discussions and tried to reach an agreement as to why their approaches did not work. Some practical procedures such as time-lines and sub-goals were then put in place to facilitate successful completion of tasks in the future. The superintendent concluded "first I want that teacher to clearly understand that he missed the mark; then its a case of supporting him by setting goals." This superintendent did not concentrate on the past, but instead took a positive approach, by attempting to make things better in future.

Reticence to Act

Reluctance to confront issues on a timely basis was considered a barrier to effectiveness by one superintendent. He felt that principals often avoided controversy by not confronting problems or dealing with issues directly. This superintendent helped principals, who were experiencing this problem, by thoroughly discussing it with them, and then explained the need for action. He approached this problem "head on," set goals for principals, discussed their accomplishment, and continually checked on their progress.

Social Problems

More and more emotionally disturbed children, from single-parent and broken families are now attending schools. These children are registered in all grade levels.. Huge amounts of time and energy are devoted to these children because of the crisis situations they create. This 5% of the population caused serious frustrations and consumed considerable staff time and prevented them from concentrating on the 95% who really wanted to work and achieve. One system attempted to cope with these problems by involving other community agencies such as social services, medical services, and the police force. In addition, the board hired liaison counsellors and placed aides in the classrooms. Problems were dealt with as they arose, liaison counsellors visited the homes, talked to the parents, and advised them where they could get help. Many aides were assigned to just one student who was difficult to control. The system also established alternative programs for students who refused to attend school.

In summary, the superintendent of this system concluded that

> we're not just saying there's a big problem and we can't do anything about it; we've got those counsellors, we've got this program at the hospital, we've got alternative programs, we're working on it, but we're fighting a big battle.

Lack of Cooperation Among Stakeholders

Teachers, parents, and trustees seeing things only from their perspective and refusing to cooperate and compromise with others was a serious constraint in one system. To help offset this attitude the superintendent promoted "partnership" in the community, involved teachers in training sessions on volunteerism, and made presentations to principals on the positive effects of parental involvement. "These were all little things that I've tired to reduce this conflict," he said.

Uninformed Trustees

A superintendent who administered a small rural board lamented that there were no "professionals" on the board. In this case, it was difficult to get trustees to understand what was taking place in the schools. They especially questioned time required by teachers to attend professional development sessions, "Since they all had degrees; why did they need further training?"

In order to overcome this barrier, the superintendent arranged for trustee workshops and presented information on current approaches and directions in education. Teachers who had received their training several years ago were desperately in need of upgrading and updating to keep themselves informed of modern approaches to teaching and learning. With adequate information, strong rationales, and a lot of encouragement trustees supported and financed these staff development programs.

Lack of Board Confidence

According to one superintendent, it was virtually impossible to operate as an effective superintendent without having the confidence of the board. He believed the onus was upon him to develop this confidence.

He enhanced board confidence by working extensively with new board members, especially with those who came with set views on how the school system should operate and how education should move. Major orientation programs were undertaken to inform these new members about the details of the system's operations. This superintendent held two meetings per month, where he either engaged outside presenters, or he himself provided two-hour sessions to talk about board members' roles and responsibilities. He also did some simulation exercises on how trustees should conduct themselves in local politics.

Inability to Mobilize Local Resources

Effective incumbents according to one respondent, "must mobilize human and financial resources to meet changes and to facilitate goals and priorities."

In order to mobilize these resources, the superintendent had to be communicative, i.e., he had to have linkages and networks with parent groups, and had to be available to hold countless informal discussions. He kept in constant contact with schools by frequent visits, and on occasions he had lunches with teachers in their staff-rooms. His purpose for visiting staff-rooms was "to talk with people, find out what their concerns were, where the pressure points were, and then with the assistance of principals try to remove any potential tarnishes." By amassing a fair amount of detail and understanding about where resistances resided, the superintendent was able to mobilize resources, thereby reducing these barriers.

Teachers' Association Rules

One superintendent felt that a barrier to his effectiveness was an over-abundance of "union rules." This was a very difficult constraint to overcome because "we spend our time talking about working together, achieving the same objectives, but the Alberta Teachers' Association is more interested in teacher welfare than the best things for children," he remarked.

In order to cope with this constraint, good communication networks were established with teachers and with the union's executive. Board members were advised not to say anything unnecessarily controversial that would antagonize the union. "Key actors" in the school system were consulted to ascertain the wishes of teachers. He stressed that, "You go and talk to these people, ask them how can we compromise on this issue, or how can we make this happen to bring about a successful conclusion." There were certain thing such as "the board's right to make public policy, which cannot be given away to the teachers, because you're giving that to the union and that's not their role," he stressed.

Lack of Contact with Schools

Managing and leading a school district effectively required superintendents to attend numerous meetings making it "impossible to get into the schools more"--a real barrier to one superintendent. Having an effective and efficient secretary who arranged for him to be away from meetings and to visit schools was perceived to be an important means of reducing this constraint.

Summary

Superintendents presented 16 constraints which tended to reduce their effectiveness. Board politics was seen as the most serious constraint of superintendents. Most of this resulted from confusion over board and superintendent roles. Superintendents emphasized that boards had a tendency to interfere with administration and to move out of the realm of policy making. In other cases, trustees were reluctant to make sound educational decisions in opposition to public pressure. Superintendents overcame this constraint by expressing their feelings openly, using reputable research in providing sound arguments, engaging trustees in frequent discussions on role clarification, working closely with board chairmen, urging trustees to update themselves, and by not interfering with the board's role.

Time constraints were somewhat overcome by enrolling in time-management courses, delegating responsibilities to others, and using electronic aids. Financial constraints were addressed by keeping trustees informed, involving appropriate staff in budgeting, lobbying provincial politicians, explaining financial problems to Alberta Education, carefully selecting priorities, and monitoring the numbers of employees. An oversized agenda was managed by delegating prudently, selecting priorities, developing policies, contracting services, and lowering the expectations of trustees. Superintendents coped with an overbearing bureaucracy by being more aggressive, getting to know and understand the roles of Department officials, and by encouraging the board to be more active in voicing its concerns about Alberta Education policies which negatively affected their systems. A number of other constraints along with methods of reducing their negative effects were mentioned.

During the follow-up interviews, one superintendent observed that superintendents had failed to mention their own individual shortcomings as a constraint.

Effective Educational Leadership

All 13 superintendents felt that "effective educational leadership" had two foci--institutional and personnel. In order to be effective, educational leaders had to be concerned about both the institution and the personnel. Although preservation and promotion of organizational objectives were also prominent, most respondents appeared to give priority to the personnel focus because educational organizations were, as one respondent observed, "people organizations."

Educational leaders were not only expected to implement organizational goals, they were prominent in establishing them. One respondent understood an effective leader to be one who could "articulate and subsequently embrace a vision about the company, the system, or the school, and then mobilize all people to bring about that vision throughout the system." Another viewed leadership as "a goal setting exercise." Effective leaders accomplished the goals or at least moved the organization in the direction of their accomplishment.

Some superintendents distinguished between leadership and management. Management had a negative connotation--it was restrictive in orientation and more bureaucratic; "it was considered something the secretary-treasurer did, rather than the job of the superintendent." Leadership on the other hand was growth oriented, facilitating, empowering, bringing about and dealing with change," and leaders themselves were "warm, caring, and concerned about individuals in the process." People could not be motivated by decree, rather, they were motivated when they believed in the leader, he enticed them into seeing his vision which they finally bought into. One respondent proposed, "it simply is more or less people; that's what its all about." He expressed the opinion that, "You can do the task as well as you like, but if you don't get the people with you; forget it."

Effective leaders set very clear directions for their school system. They ensured that the stakeholders had a knowledge and understanding of these directions, and eventually supported them. This involved considerable communication on the part of leaders. They were to inform people of what was happening and were expected to promote a positive image to the public, staff, and students.

While all superintendents realized the importance of people to the accomplishment of goals, only 23% viewed effective leaders as almost exclusively in the people domain. One said the leadership was effective "if everyone is able to do their job to the best of their ability." This to him meant things were happening the way they should--students were successful, teachers were successful, principals were successful, and the superintendent and the board were successful. Effective leadership permitted all to share success. Another felt that people in the organization needed to be commended for their accomplishments. He observed, "When people are successful you have to let them know; you can't take things for granted, you can't be stagnant, you can't be complacent, and think things are running well here so lets not fix it."

Effective leaders clearly realized that educational organizations are always developing; there were always higher planes to strive for. They had to be willing to confront future challenges; it was not enough to "sit back on past laurels and ride the waves through the next couple of years," remarked one superintendent. Another advocated that effective leaders "ensured that things moved positively in their jurisdiction." In this case, if students, parents, and teachers were happy then the system was moving in a positive direction.

One superintendent referred all accomplishments back to the classroom and felt the classroom provided a model for whatever was being done in the school system. It's the idea of grass-roots input, "bottom up" as opposed to "top down" leadership, he observed. The key in this leadership model was to bring about ownership, especially that of teachers. This superintendent stated, "A lot of initiatives will never be achieved if there isn't ownership, and there won't be ownership unless there's grass-roots involvement in the process."

In summary, effective educational leaders had a vision, they communicated that vision, and encouraged people to buy into it. Another stated, "Effective leadership boils down to what you are able to provide, because we're working constantly in groups of people; you have to get that group of people working in a common direction and the group must feel it is the direction it should be moving." Simply, effective leaders accomplish goals or realize visions.

Demonstrations of Educational Leadership

Superintendents were asked "how they demonstrated educational leadership in their systems." Their responses and frequencies are shown in Table 6.5. All superintendents viewed certain behaviors as important in demonstrating educational leadership. A majority of respondents may have leaned heavily toward the behavioristic model because of the wording of the question--"by what methods do you attempt to demonstrate educational leadership in your school system." The question solicits an action-oriented response, rather than seeking distinguishing features of the phenomena.

Superintendents had already responded to questions on general priorities, criteria upon which they judged system effectiveness, criteria upon which they judged

Table 6.5

Frequency of Mention of Behaviors Used to Demonstrate Educational Leadership

Methods	f
Behaviors	
Being action-oriented.	13
Being an effective delegator.	13
Being an example.	6
Involving all stakeholders.	5
Providing people with adequate and relevant information.	4
Being conscious of everything you say and do.	2
Being supportive.	1
Being trustworthy.	1
Being perceptive.	1
Being visionary.	1
Being enthusiastic.	1
Being available.	1
Being humble.	1
Total	50

Note. The number of behaviors mentioned by superintendents ranged from 1 to 7.

superintendent effectiveness, priorities for educational programs, methods for evaluating programs and personnel, nature of interactions with important constituents, style of involvement in school board meetings, means of establishing board agendas, bases of influence, and personal values. Some were surprised by the question and felt that to answer the question thoroughly they would need to go back over all questions already responded to in the past hour or so. One respondent asked "should we go back over the last 2 hours." A number stated they were not satisfied with the answers they had given, one echoed the feelings of many in the following statement: "I don't know, I haven't answered that question very well, I'm glad this is not on my doctoral oral examination." During the follow-up interviews, one respondent stated that "to demonstrate educational leadership a superintendent simply has to implement the boards plan."

Action-oriented

All superintendents were concerned about setting and accomplishing goals. Goal accomplishment required action and being able to mobilize the resources--both human and financial to reach these goals. "The written word is to become synonymous with actual practice," advocated one superintendent. Another stated, "I think we try to put our words into action." Leadership meant doing something. Being action-oriented meant making changes, developing objectives, goals, and mission statements. One stated "I think it's to make sure things happen, you are always expected to deliver." Another succinctly summarized this notion--"leadership is identifying goals and issues with staff and then leading the system to meet these particular issues."

By Example

Leading by example did not mean always doing something and expecting others to duplicate that action; It meant creating clear expectations for others. One respondent emphasized, "it's a well known fact, that what I expect of others, I expect of myself, plus more; you go a mile and I'll go a mile and a half." Another referred to the notion as "walk the talk" or in another's words "don't just talk a good story, do a good story." Similarly, another stated, "be a doer and not necessarily just a delegator, manage that delegation." Leading by example had drawbacks though according to one superintendent. He lamented "I find myself among those trees, and I can't see the forest, but I constantly have to put things in perspective."

Effective leadership then involved lots of modelling, doing, and setting examples. One respondent observed that "we learn from each other with that mode of operation."

Involving Stakeholders

As has already been noted, educational organizations are people organizations. In order for the organization to be effective, people must cooperate and support each other. Different individuals and stakeholders must trust and work together cooperatively. No individual or group is an island unto itself. For this cooperation to take place there must be open, honest two way communication, people clearly understood the leaders stand on important issues, relationships were trusting, people were encouraged to become involved in the decision making process, and superintendents were prepared to explain why certain actions were taken and why certain decisions were made.

Superintendents felt compelled to deciminate relevant information from Alberta Education to the different groups in the system. Principals were given a flavor for the important issues at the provincial and board levels. One respondent stated, "There's a lot of information out there which has to be distributed and understood by the system before people become involved in the process of "becoming effective."

One respondent remarked, "Community involvement is important to our board, I think it's where education is going." Principals were encouraged to involve community members. The press was encouraged to attend board meetings because, "We want the public to know a bit about what's going on in schools," observed one superintendent.

Superintendents felt compelled to clearly inform the public of the direction in which the system was heading, and also of its accomplishments.

Teachers were encouraged to think of themselves as educational leaders. One respondent stated, "sometimes teachers don't see themselves as leaders, but they have the key leadership role in the whole system." Superintendent/teacher relationship-building was ongoing and crucial. In some cases, the effective classroom model could be superimposed upon the whole system.

Effective superintendents spoke extensively about their involvement with people--building trust, building partnerships, and developing a team spirit. It involved being human, being willing to admit failures and mistakes, and then improve upon them. One stated, "I'm only as good as the people I work with; I'm no better than any other person or any other thing."

In addition to involving stakeholders in the regular agendas, some superintendents involved the whole system in social activities. One remarked, "We have everybody come into a social night at the beginning of the year. It's hosted by the board; I usually do a little spiel, where I talk about things we're trying to do, i.e., our policies and our values." It was a time for staff to meet informally to get to know each other. "It was a real plus," stated one respondent. "I've got teachers in one end of the system feeling very comfortable about picking up the phone and talking to people in the other end.because they get to know each other at these social gatherings." This helped to create very open communication with teachers and principals throughout the entire system.

Keep Stakeholders Informed

Because of their positions, superintendents were able to gather considerable amounts of information about the system and its operations. They knew Alberta Education's intentions, board plans, and those of other educational agencies. They had a grasp of the whole picture, and were seen as holders of large amounts of information. It was incumbent upon superintendents to explain to people what they planned to do, if necessary justify why, and also to explain to people why decisions were made as they were. A respondent stated, "People are a lot more accepting of a decision if (a) they've had some input, and (b) if you go back and tell them, you didn't accept their recommendation, and explain to them why not."

By Every Thing You Say or Do

"Effective educational leadership," one superintendent stated, "is provided in every way--from sending congratulatory notes to the band teacher, to establishing policies, to placing top people in all their roles, to establishing solid administrative structures, to defining administrative roles and the list goes on." Another stated, "Its through damn near everything that I do in the district." Effective leadership, then, permeated the whole system and was not characteristic of one behavior or encompassed in one trait.

Others

In addition to the behaviors reported above, respondents also presented the following behaviors which were considered important in demonstrating educational leadership.

Superintendents had to have the ability to establish trust and build bridges. They were perceptive, i.e., "they could get a handle on a situation very quickly" according to one respondent. They were not involved in too much detail; it was advisable for them to grasp the whole picture.

Superintendents needed the support of the board to be effective; board confidence was crucial. It was important for superintendents to clearly state their own beliefs and orientations. They were expected to be positive and enthusiastic about education and to project that image, and to be open and available to stakeholders. One respondent emphasized that, "If people want to talk to me or see me, I make myself available." In addition to being supportive, it does not hurt to be humble, according to another.

Summary

Effective educational leaders facilitated the setting of organizational goals and took charge of the implementation of these goals. Boards and community members were heavily involved in goal setting while the accomplishment of goals was left to staff. This leadership was demonstrated by involving all stakeholders, being an example, keeping all informed, and being action-oriented. Mentioned with less frequency were trustworthiness, being positive, being enthusiastic, being visionary, being available, being humble, and being a warm, supportive person.

Factors Contributing to Superintendent Effectiveness

Superintendents were asked, "What are the most important factors that contribute to superintendent effectiveness?" The findings are coded under two major headings--personal and situational factors. The factors and their frequencies are shown in Table 6.6.

Personal Factors

Various personal factors are discussed below under appropriate headings.

People skills. Nearly one-half of the superintendents indicated that they must have "people skills" because education is a "people business;" the entire job was dealing with people. Good interpersonal skills were essential. People skills were described by one respondent as

> not just the day to day dealings with people; it includes things such as conflict resolution skills, mediation skills, how you listen to people, and how you give direction. You can't be in this job and not direct people: but it has to be done in a very meaningful, effective, and acceptable manner.

Another respondent viewed people skills as establishing "good communication networks." This was partially accomplished by identifying goals, and by making sure that people understood, adopted, and moved toward their achievement."

In the follow-up interviews some superintendents expressed a desire for more elaboration on "people skills." It was suggested by one respondent that people skills

Table 6.6

Frequency of Mention of Factors Contributing to Superintendent Effectiveness

Factors	f	Total
Personal factors		
Having skills in dealing with people.	6	
Having a sense of direction.	3	
Having a sound knowledge base.	3	
Being politically astute.	2	
Being able to mobilize personnel.	1	
Being devoted, dedicated, principled, and respectful.	1	
Being credible.	1	
Being flexible.	1	
Being available.	1	
Having a knowledge of provincial educational networks.	1	
Being organized.	1	
Being oriented towards action.	1	
Involving staff in the administrative process.	1	
Being honest and courageous.	1	
Being highly energetic and enthusiastic.	1	25
Situational factors		
Having an action-oriented, supportive board.	2	
Having an adequate supply of resources.	1	
Having a committed staff.	1	
Having a supportive public.	1	
Having a history of student achievement in the system.	1	
Having few student discipline problems.	1	
Having external support bases.	1	8
Total	33	33

Note. The number of factors mentioned by superintendents ranged from 2 to 7.

included these matters: being perceptive, being able to communicate, which included listening, being competent, and possessing intuition and credibility.

Sense of direction. Superintendents need a sense of direction, they need to be able to see the big picture. One superintendent emphasized, "We must never ever lose sight of why we're here and that's the kids."

Have a sound knowledge base. Three superintendents perceived that they needed specialized knowledge and skills to cope with the needs and the demands of the varied clientele. They worked with, and for, people of varied backgrounds and levels of expertise. These individuals expected superintendents to be able to empathize and understand their concerns and problems.

Politically astute. School systems were comprised of individuals and groups with many interests and persuasions. It required considerable acumen on the part of the superintendent to be able to balance all of these forces. .One proposed that,"You have to understand the dynamics of politics, whether you like it or not, in order to be effective." Superintendents were constantly exposed to the political arena, but expressed reservations about having to cope with it. One respondent lamented that, "I sometimes associate politics with honesty and the two don't mesh." He added that, "This is not a general sweeping statement--there are good, solid, honest politicians, who are really trying to do something." Another felt "that superintendents had to have some strong political skills, because they worked in an environment of policy development where political involvement from all elements, i.e., teachers, parents, special interest groups, and even trustees themselves" was evident.

Mobilize personnel. According to one superintendent, one of his roles was to coordinate and mobilize the efforts of staff to achieve the goals of the system. This superintendent stated that, "if I'm moving the assistant superintendent, other central office personnel, and trustees toward the organizational goals then I'm reasonably effective."

Devoted, dedicated, and principled. A superintendent stated, "you must be a devoted, dedicated, and principled individual who gets along well with people; you must also respect and trust them."

Credibility. The number one factor contributing to superintendent effectiveness, according to one superintendent, was "credibility." In other words, they had to have a knowledge and experience base which gave them credibility with the people with whom they worked. Further, during the follow-up interviews, a respondent stated, "The superintendent must be a person of integrity, have a well developed sense of values, and be willing to defend these values especially during difficult times." Another felt that more emphasis should be placed on integrity in any study of superintendent effectiveness.

Flexibility. Superintendents had to be flexible. They had to be able to adjust very rapidly and switch thought patterns and processes quickly. One observed, "You're dealing with one thing one minute, and the second minute you're dealing with a totally different situation."

Availability. Superintendents made themselves available. It was important to meet to discuss issues and problems with different interest groups; even if the issues were controversial.

Knowledge of provincial networks. The province of Alberta has a number of agencies and groups involved in the educational process. Alberta Education, school trustees' association, teachers' association, and the conference of superintendents were four of the important ones. These agencies all had important and relevant services to offer superintendents. It was incumbent upon superintendents to be aware of these services and which agency provided what.

Organized. According to one superintendent, "You've got a lot of things to hang on to within the superintendency." There's information relative to each individual school, about facilities and maintenance, about transportation, and a host of other things which one has to keep on top of at all times. This superintendent stated, "You can't remember it all so you have to be organized or have a secretary who's organized." It was necessary for this superintendent to keep notes for later reference. He also attempted to perform all tasks before the end of every day, though this was not always possible. As he stated, "You can't stay on one project all day and just work at it, because the phone's always going, but when I get into something in-depth I complete it before I go onto the next big issue."

Action-oriented. Being action-oriented was a factor which contributed to effectiveness according to one superintendent. He stated, "You have to get out there and you have to find out what's going on and you have to meet the people who run the system." This superintendent did not hesitate to make changes in his first year of the superintendency, because it was important for the staff to see the superintendent as "a person who will act, and not as someone who is trying to please everybody."

Involve staff. Superintendents needed the support of their different staffs in order to operate effective systems. One respondent believed that the involvement of all staff members in the development of a five year strategic plan was very important to a superintendent's effectiveness.

Honesty and courage. Virtually every day superintendents had to make decisions from a number of alternatives. One emphasized, "I believe very strongly that you get out there and get as much input as possible, but sooner or later you've got to say, 'this is the way it's going to be,' and sometimes that's not very popular, but it's got to be that way." Superintendent had to have the courage to make these decisions, because eventually, "This type of backbone was needed to maintain effectiveness."

Energetic, principled, and enthusiastic. High demands were placed on superintendents time. In order to cope with these heavy demands, superintendents, according to one respondent, need " high energy and enthusiasm." He also stated, "You need principles and commitment with respect to developing a vision and moving towards it." These beliefs and principles formed the bases for choosing among the many alternatives in making difficult decisions.

Situational Factors

Superintendents did not have control of some of the factors which contributed to their effectiveness. These factors were inherent in the situation or the circumstances in which incumbents found themselves. The situational factors are presented in Table 6.6.

Action-oriented, supportive board. Superintendents appreciated trustees who wanted to improve educational programs for children, kept their staffs on the cutting edge of pedagogical developments and who appreciated parental involvement. It helps though, as one respondent remarked, "when the board has the financial resources." He added, "I don't know whether there would have been the same kinds of success if we didn't have the resources." This same respondent had previously worked in a system which didn't have adequate financial resources, but he felt good things happened because "I think it's a people business." Another superintendent reported, "There's a factor of luck in superintendent effectiveness, and that's the luck of the draw with the people you get to work with as trustees." If trustees have different values than chief executive officers then "there should be a parting of the ways," he noted.

Supportive environment. A supportive environment included committed trustees, committed staff, a supportive public, and a supportive personal base.

Superintendents valued staff who were committed and supported students, teaching, and learning. It was believed by one that, a history of commitment to students, led to high student scores on Achievement and Diploma Exams and few discipline problems. One superintendent of a small system noted, "I haven't had an expulsion request for three years." Another important factor which contributed to superintendent effectiveness was having a supportive general public. One respondent remarked, "The public pay average taxes here; some districts with our tax potential would pay less. People here have supported higher taxes than their neighbors, so I think that's an indication of strong support for education." Superintendents needed time to socialize and get away from the "heavy traffic" associated with central offices. One said, "I think of the home environment, I think of leisure and relaxation, and I have an opportunity to be in a social club away from the stress of the job."

In summary, the factors contributing to superintendent effectiveness were coded under two major headings--personal and situational. Most superintendents realized the necessity of having both types of supports to achieve maximum effectiveness. One superintendent summed up the personal factors when he stated, "They are your values, your drive, the examples you create, your communication skills, a sense of humor, a tolerance for turbulence, human relations skills, and your knowledge base." A supportive infrastructure was also necessary for effectiveness. Educational agencies, boards, administration, teachers, students, parents, social clubs, and the family all contributed to the effectiveness of superintendents.

During the follow-up interviews, all superintendents generally agreed with the findings in Table 6.6. Some noted the integrated nature of the findings, and that many of them were in the realm of "people skills." A number of the respondents noted that the superintendent was crucial in coordinating the efforts of the whole district. This was the only position in the system cast in that role. In one superintendent's opinion, these findings indicated that the "superintendent was a problem solver."

Graduate Study in Education and Superintendent Effectiveness

All superintendents, except two, indicated a close relationship between graduate study in education and superintendent effectiveness. They felt that graduate school had provided them a strong theoretical base from which to operate, but were less enthusiastic about its relevance to practice. In advocating the theoretical significance of graduate programs, a superintendent observed that "the many courses I have taken have expanded my horizon at the theoretical level rather than at the nuts and bolts level." He added, "That's the way it should be. Anybody believing they can go to university at the master's and doctorate level and end up with a recipe for a better superintendent ought not to go there." According to him, universities should deal with bigger issues such as models, and theories. The practical things of writing memos, conducting meetings, and dealing with conflict should be learned on the job and adapted to each individual's circumstance. Another respondent thought graduate programs should provide courses on "educational leadership and politics; it kind of gives you an idea of where things fit," he said. Superintendents were expected to operate beyond the level of management, beyond administrivia. "You have to have a vision and you aren't going to have that vision if you haven't been reading, thinking, and studying," admitted a superintendent.

One superintendent was especially strong in his praise of the benefits of graduate study. "It wasn't good enough to learn by experience; experience had to be placed in a theoretical framework," he observed. He added, "Nearly everything I do has some root in what I learned at graduate school." Graduate school gave him models of operation that, when integrated, gave a total picture. This same superintendent strongly advocated that the boards administrative staff attend graduate schools of administration. This board granted bursaries and sabbaticals for staff to enroll in courses at the university of their choice. Their professional development fund was purported to be one of the best in the province.

Another superintendent felt that graduate school helped in some practical ways. "It could be valuable in identifying the attributes of a superintendent which contribute to effectiveness--like this study may be," he stated. It could help boards in their selection process by giving them information on what kinds of things to look for in a superintendent. Graduate school could also help agencies such as the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) and the Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA) in providing professional development. "The universities could be a big help to us in conducting high quality development programs," he believed.

Rather than attend university full time, one superintendent updated and upgraded himself by subscribing to reputable educational journals such as the Alberta Journal of Educational Research, The American Educational Digest, the Executive Educator, The Canadian Administrator, and the American School Board Journal. However, he admitted that "graduate study put him in touch with an awful lot of material in a hurry." He felt there were very few new developments he hadn't heard about after reading these journals and scholarly works.

Three of the superintendents felt that graduate programs were too theoretical and did not provide enough "hands-on" practical knowledge for incumbents and aspiring superintendents. One stated, "I found very little of value in terms of what I needed for the job." He felt there were very few courses which related to what was happening in the field. One superintendent, who did his graduate work in the United States, spoke very highly of the university that he attended because "courses were practical, based on the real stuff, and not laden with theory." He felt that the analysis of more case studies would be most beneficial. University programs would be more useful he thought, "if there were more practical exposure provided through an internship program." The third superintendent thought many university professors had "sometimes lost touch with practice." He recommended that professors "could keep themselves up to date by walking a mile in their students' shoes." He advocated that university professors who teach graduate students should familiarize themselves more with current issues and problems in education. Superintendents, he suggested, could easily provide a list.

According to one superintendent, graduate school gave one practice in handling the type of workloads associated with the superintendency. A respondent stated, "Taking a major piece of work such as a dissertation and working it through, having it seriously critiqued by a variety of people, sure is a humbling experience." He stated, "I am now happy if people look at my work; whereas before, I used to get a little too defensive." He believed that another positive aspect of the doctoral program was it teaches one how to get things done."

Only two superintendents did not see much benefit at all in graduate schools of education. One viewed his job as 90% public relations and 10% knowledge. He stated that the most important attributes were "your human relations skills and your ability to communicate." This, he felt, had to be learned on the job, not in graduate school.

In summary, superintendents were generally positive about the extensive theoretical background which was provided in graduate programs. Most advised that graduate schools should not get involved in practical applications of that theory, however, a few (23%) felt a need to have more practical "hands-on" experiences. These superintendents advocated more "nuts and bolts" types of issues, presented through case studies and internship programs.

Valuable In-service Activities

Most superintendents attended and many helped to organize activities for the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS). CASS involved members in practical types of issues. However, the major benefit of CASS was that it afforded superintendents the opportunity to interact informally. A superintendent proposed that, "One of the most important in-services is just the interaction of two superintendents; it offers more value, more merit than anything you do." Similarly, another respondent stated, "The informal discussion with people in the corridors, in the hallways, and between breaks has probably been the most beneficial to me."

Superintendents welcomed intensive in-service sessions on relevant topics such as leadership styles, financial management, time management, crisis management, managing problem employees, strategic planning, organizational effectiveness, and effective communication skills. Superintendents were not active participants in the Canadian Education Association (CEA) workshop, held every spring in Banff because (a) it was a poor time of year--major staffing activities were taking place, and (b) one superintendent jokingly said "we'd have to pay as much as you'd pay from Newfoundland." (The cost of these workshops were shared equally among participants regardless of the distances travelled.)

Two superintendents kept themselves up to date by reading research publications. One stated, "I am one of these people who can study very effectively by myself and I don't need a lot of external stimulation." Another stated, "Reading is one of the most beneficial things that I do; I get a lot of current information as to what's happening in the world of administration through the reading of professional publications."

Some superintendents arranged for their own professional development within their districts. One arranged fireside chats with a few employees; this, he felt, gave him the opportunity to reflect on the systems' performance in general, and perhaps on his own performance in particular. Another arranged retreats with the local staff. At these retreats speakers were engaged to focus the topics, and stimulate discussions. Still another arranged for three week summer academies.

In summary, superintendents attended in-service sessions dealing with current issues. These sessions should not be longer than a week. It was strongly recommended that time be set aside at these sessions for informal interactions, where system commonalties and differences could be candidly discussed, and where feedback could be honestly and privately given. Some superintendents kept themselves updated on current research and administrative practices by subscribing to reputable publications. District staff were often used as sounding boards for assessing the effectiveness of past practice and soliciting opinions on future directions and plans.

Superior Types of Administrative Behavior

Twelve of the superintendents responded to the question, "In what ways do you consider that your administrative behavior is superior to that of superintendents who could be considered as less organizationally effective." One stated, "That's a tricky question," another felt that, "The question was loaded," while yet another queried "You can't be humble when you answer this, can you?" Superintendents selected for this study speculated that they might be considered superior to their less organizationally effective colleagues in a number of areas. These areas and their frequencies are shown in Table 6.7.

Supportive of Staff

Seven superintendents acknowledged they operated in a people-oriented organization; therefore, their staffs were their most important asset. Superintendents who established good working relationships with others in their school systems considered themselves successful. Those who buffer themselves "appear to be organizationally effective but ultimately they're not," observed one superintendent. He suggested, "I could spend my whole working time in this office and I could be very effective in taking care of correspondence, but I'd lose track of the school system, and ultimately lose my effectiveness." Superintendents who were doing excellent jobs had people skills.They were more than just nice persons; they had credibility, they were inspirational, they had a vision, they had developed a base of support, and people had confidence in their decisions. One respondent stated, "Those superintendents who are doing well are those that are 'close to the customer'."

Employees who were experiencing professional problems were dealt with through face-to-face contact rather than written correspondence. One superintendent felt that, "others issued many more directives from their offices" than he did, and further, they did not take the time to meet those people face-to-face who were experiencing problems. Some

Table 6.7

Frequency of Mention of Types of Administrative Behavior Superior to That of Superintendents Who Could Be Considered Less Organizationally Effective

Types of behavior	f
Behavior	
Being supportive of staff.	6
Being humble.	3
Taking a positive approach to issues.	2
Keeping up to date.	2
Being student-centred.	2
Being a hard worker.	2
Delegating and then not interfering.	2
Using persuasive tactics.	2
Knowing your particular system.	2
Having freedom to act granted by the board.	1
Having the willingness and courage to act.	1
Being versatile.	1
Total	26

Note. The number of types of behaviors mentioned by superintendents ranged from 1 to 4.

superintendents were proud of the fact that they had peace and harmony in the work place. One noted, "We have never had a board of reference or a teacher strike in this system."

Effective superintendents maintained a reasonable balance between task and people, with perhaps more emphasis upon people. One stated, "you can have all the structure and task orientation you want, but if you don't have people with you, you can't accomplish anything." School organizations are a conglomerate of people, and if superintendents are unable to deal effectively with people "they can't be good superintendents," stated one respondent. Although the emphasis on people is paramount, tasks cannot be ignored, and without a well-planned structure with sound policies organizations cannot operate effectively. One proposed that, "You need a structure to free up your time so that you can do what you have to do in terms of planning and dealing with people." Some were able to perform large volumes of work, but they often ran into trouble because they neglected to pay attention to what motivates people.

In summary, effective superintendents solicited and valued the input of staff within the organization. Dictatorial approaches did not work. These respondents realized the importance of good communication networks for they sought input from staff before making decisions. Organizations were formed for the purpose of accomplishing goals; these leaders clearly realize that goals were accomplished through the efforts of people.

Humility

Education covers such a wide spectrum it is impossible to be an authority on everything. One superintendent stated, "if any person occupying the superintendency thinks he or she is the ultimate authority in the business of education they are doomed to failure." Another observed, "there's a lot of superintendents who like to go to meetings and tell about all the great things they're doing; I don't do that, I just do my own thing." Some were not aggressive and found it difficult to "speak at meetings when there's all these other important superintendents there." Addressing the notion of humility, one respondent stated

> I don't have a big ego, I'm not in the superintendency because I'm on an ego trip; people had to talk me into getting into it. Some of my counterparts are on an ego trip, they're impressed with their own importance and they've got a big desk and a fancy travel allowance and they go to all these conventions.

Positive Approach to Issues

Educational organizations are in a constant state of change. New developments and approaches are continually appearing. Superintendents were expected to adjust and adapt, not only themselves, but their systems to these changes. Changes came in many forms and were advocated by many different agencies. Those who were able to adjust and adapt to the times were considered effective. One superintendent used the example of "home schooling" to illustrate his point. For some time, the government had favored home schooling as a viable option for providing an educational service to some students in the province. Some systems developed policies that supported and facilitated the involvement of students in these programs, while others had refused to cooperate in accommodating the parents legal right in any way because it was not administratively expedient. One suggested that, "You have to come from the perspective of what is good for kids, and everything else is secondary; I keep on having that focus."

Some superintendents simply felt they were more positive than the average person, grasped the big picture, and spent "less time nattering people about details."

Student-centered

Students are the focus of educational organizations. Some less effective superintendents were "more concerned about administering the system than they were about students," according to one respondent. They were overwhelmed with the organizational aspect of the system and placed less emphasis upon relevant programs for all students. One superintendent did not see his behavior as being superior to other superintendents but upon reflection felt, "Perhaps it's got something to do with the kids and my emphasis on kid-centeredness."

Keeping up to Date with Current Thinking

Superintendents were clearly system leaders, and as leaders they had to be "on the cutting edge" of any developments affecting education. Two superintendents regarded themselves as innovators and as such were willing to take risks to reach their goals. They were not afraid to do things differently and often challenged established practices. In their efforts to keep themselves up to date, superintendent continually rejuvenated themselves by attending conferences, taking summer courses, and enrolling in programs of longer duration such as doctoral programs. One respondent stated, "I get stressed out at the job, I don't know how people manage after they've done it for so long; they need to get away and refresh themselves."

Energetic

One superintendent stated, "I work very hard, there's no royal road to learning, there's no royal road to the superintendency either; you've got to put in long hours, you've got to meet with many, many people." Another postulated, "I think people would describe me as a hard worker and a person who likes to get things done."

Willingness and Courage to Act

Superintendents confronted many issues and problems daily. According to one respondent, effective superintendents "had the courage and willingness to act" when necessary. They became involved and solved problems by moving quickly before they developed into bigger issues.

Persuasive Tactics

According to one respondent, "Some superintendents felt it was their job to be dictatorial and ram everything through." Autocratic superintendents fail to acknowledge that they themselves are not the ones doing most things, they have to rely on others.

Effective superintendents were persuasive in getting their jobs done and only used dictatorial approaches when absolutely necessary.

Delegate

Clearly superintendents worked with highly capable and qualified staff. Effective superintendents delegated tasks and responsibilities to them and did not interfere after the delegation. A superintendent stated, "You have to establish trust with people that you can do your job, and you also have to trust them to do theirs."

Versatile

Because superintendents worked with people of different backgrounds, training, and interests, versatility and flexibility were required. One stated "you're dealing with the caretaker, the secretary, the teacher, the assistant superintendent, and the trustees all at the same time." They had to have the human relations skills to be able to empathize with the interests and concerns of these different groups. In order to do this, one respondent felt, "You have to be tolerant, very tolerant indeed!"

Given Freedom by the Board to Act

One felt that less effective superintendents were often not given freedom by their boards to do their jobs. He stated, "I've been given the scope to do things while others have not." This board gave lots of scope, leeway, and support to the superintendent to be innovative. He remarked, "I don't think every board does that. Some boards control everybody; if the board controls the superintendent, the superintendent naturally controls principals and so on."

Know Your System

It was incumbent upon superintendents to know the details of their own particular school system. They were aware that approaches that worked in other systems might not work in theirs. One respondent recommended that, "You move ahead with all the energy you've got, and don't worry about other people's perception of things. Be yourself."

In summary, superintendents in this study conjectured that they might be considered more effective than some of their colleagues because they were more supportive of staff, more positive in their approach to issues, more up to date on educational developments, more student centered, harder workers, more humble, delegated more to others and avoided interfering, used more persuasive tactics as opposed to being dictatorial, were given more freedom by their boards to act, had more willingness and courage to act, were more versatile, and knew and understood the details of their respective systems better.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined in detail, the notion of effectiveness from a variety of perspectives.

The effectiveness of school systems was based on the following criteria: student performance as assessed by a variety of performance indicators, staff satisfaction and performance, public satisfaction, board performance, and some miscellaneous indicators.

Superintendents' performances were formally and annually assessed in 12 systems. In addition to these formal assessments, superintendents were sensitive to informal, unsolicited feedback from a variety of sources.

Many constraints tended to reduce the effectiveness of superintendents. They approached these constraints positively. Their negative affects were clearly understood and a variety of methods were presented to overcome them.

A number of behaviors characteristic of effective educational leaders were proposed. They were especially action-oriented, effective delegators, leaders by example, and were supportive of the efforts of others.

Superintendents presented a number of personal and situational factors which contributed to their effectiveness. The most frequently mentioned, personal factors were having skills in working with people, a sense of direction, and a sound knowledge base. The situational factors were having an action-oriented, supportive board, an adequate supply of resources, a committed staff, a supportive public, a system with a history of student achievement, few student discipline problems, and external support bases.

These superintendents were reluctant to present types of administrative behavior which they thought might be superior to some of their less effective colleagues. However they did offer some as shown in Table 6.7.

A close relationship was perceived to exist between graduate school and superintendent effectiveness. Most superintendents supported the theoretical nature of graduate courses. The few who desired courses of a more practical nature were disappointed.

Professional development activities comprised of small group discussions and one-on-one interactions were highly supported.

In the follow-up interviews, superintendents generally agreed with the findings which were presented from this chapter. They particularly noted the following: many of the findings overlap and are interrelated, i.e., they were not mutually exclusive; some incumbents can effectively handle most superintendencies if they have the right personal attributes, although different systems require different leadership styles; women were becoming more prominent in administration; there was considerable diversity in the findings; and finally, training and promotion opportunities must be provided to superintendents.

Chapter 7

EVALUATION METHODS--PROGRAMS AND PERSONNEL

This chapter presents the findings related to Questions 4(b) and 5:

4. (b) What methods do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational programs in your schools?

5. What methods do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of personnel in your school system?
   (i) At your central office
   (ii) In your schools (administrators and teachers)

Program Evaluation--Effectiveness Indicators

The responses of superintendents to question 4 (b) are presented under two headings --Indicators, and Process. An overwhelming number of the respondents (77%) presented performance indicators of program effectiveness in responding to the question. (See Table 7.1.)

Parental Satisfaction Surveys

Parental Satisfaction Surveys or Parental Attitude Surveys were reported to be administered in 54% of the school jurisdictions. These questionnaire surveys which were administered in 2-5 year cycles, sought both general and specific information. Such questions as "Do you feel your child likes school?" or "Do you feel your school system is using its money in a reasonable manner?" were general, while "Are you pleased with the way the school is handling the following programs?" followed by a list of programs offered in the school, were more specific. Scales (such as mostly yes, mostly no, undecided, and insufficient information) were used to record parental responses. Questionnaires were adapted to different ages and grades. Data from these surveys were often collected and analyzed by independent consultants to ensure confidentiality and

Table 7.1

Frequency of Mention of Methods Used to Evaluate Educational Programs

Methods	f	Total
Indicators		
Use feedback from parental satisfaction surveys.	7	
Use student scores on achievement tests.	6	
Use student scores on diploma exams.	6	
Use student scores on teacher-made tests.	1	
Use student scores on Canadian Test of Basic Skills.	1	
Use teacher comments.	1	
Use dropout rates.	1	
Use results of staff evaluations.	1	24
Process		
Use cyclical evaluations.	7	
Use Alberta Education staff as evaluators.	4	
Develop school-specific action plans.	3	
Use internal and external evaluators.	3	
Present detailed reports.	2	
Provide follow-up.	1	20
Total	44	44

Note. The number of methods mentioned by superintendents ranged from 2 to 6.

impartiality. The results of these analyses frequently resulted in program modifications or even program cancellations. One superintendent, commenting on the importance and significance of the surveys, stated that, "One of the indicators of effectiveness is whether or not parents are satisfied with the programs available to their kids." He added, "If parents are getting good information relative to their kids, they'll be supportive, and if they're dissatisfied we'll hear." Another echoed much the same concerns when he stated, "on our surveys, we ask for parental opinions on the effectiveness of our programs."

Achievement Tests

Provincially devised achievement tests were administered to students on selected subjects in Grades 3, 6, and 9. For example, in 1989 achievement tests were administered in Grade 3 English language, Grade 6 social studies, and Grade 9 science. The results of these tests provided educators not only an opportunity to inform parents about the strengths but also the initiatives taken to address weaknesses of programs. Further, these tests enabled Alberta Education to monitor the level of achievement of students throughout the province. The provincial reports of these tests were distributed publicly. Individual boards and schools decided on the means and details of distribution in their respective jurisdictions.

Forty-six percent of the respondents believed that the results of these achievement tests were important indicators to use judging the effectiveness of programs. A number of superintendents indicated that they took the results of these tests very seriously. One respondent stated, "We break down each component area. It's the responsibility of schools to go back and reassess areas where they may not have achieved to their expectations, or where they fell below provincial averages, and to determine why that occurred." Another reported, "We treat the provincial tests very seriously, we use them to work with principals in helping them to overcome perceived weaknesses in programs."

Diploma Exams

Diploma exams were administered to senior high school students in English, social studies, French, mathematics, biology, chemistry, and physics. The purposes of these exams were to maintain high standards of student performance throughout the province, certify the level of academic achievement of individual students, and in the interest of maintaining equity, provide province-wide measures of students' achievement. To obtain a credit in a Grade 12 diploma course, students had to attain a final blended mark of 50% or higher on a 50:50 combination of school and provincial evaluations.

Student scores on these exams were considered by 46% of the superintendents to be important indicators of program effectiveness. Further many saw them as one of the ways in which Alberta Education monitors effectiveness.

Other Indicators

Teacher-made tests, the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, teachers' comments, and numbers of dropouts were mentioned by a few superintendents as indicators of program success.

Program Evaluation--Process

The processes used to evaluate program effectiveness and their frequencies of mention are recorded in Table 7.1.

Individual programs were often evaluated as part of the total school evaluation process. Program evaluations were reported to have occurred in over half of the school systems. An examination of documents revealed that most school systems had developed policies to guide the evaluation of programs. These policies usually indicated that the evaluation of programs were aimed at enhancing student growth, ensuring that programs were being offered in accordance with Alberta Education requirements, ensuring that suitable resources were provided and appropriately used, and ensuring that appropriate in-service and professional development programs were provided to teachers and administrators to enhance their delivery. Following these evaluations, decisions were made to maintain, modify, or discontinue existing programs, or to develop and implement new programs.

Superintendents and their assistants assumed responsibility for planning, organizing, and implementing program evaluation procedures. Teams of internal and external evaluators were engaged to examine the details of program delivery. External evaluators were sometimes provided by Alberta Education and less frequently by other school systems. These evaluators collected considerable amounts of program-specific data, following which, according to one respondent, "They presented massive reports consisting of recommendations with systematic follow-up procedures." Another stated, "We go in and describe a program one year, and the next year teachers respond." A superintendent with considerable tenure noted that during the 1970s, regional offices were staffed with many ex-superintendents who decided to remain working with the Department of Education after the school act changed to have superintendents appointed by local boards. He stated, "These people would come out as a team, interview people, write a report, set out some recommendations, and outline an action plan to accomplish the recommendations." He lamented that, "Since most of these people have retired; a void now exists."

Evaluation of Central Office Personnel

Central office personnel were evaluated in all 13 school systems. The methods of evaluation and their frequencies of use are shown in Table 7.2.

Larger districts with more employees had adopted a more formal structure than the smaller ones. In one of the small districts, the superintendent was the only full time professional educator. In this instance, the regular notion of central office personnel evaluation was not applicable. Some common methods and approaches to the evaluation of these personnel were applied, even though there was a significant range in system size.

Table 7.2

Frequency Distribution of Mention of Methods Used to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Central Office Personnel

Methods	f
Use a hierarchical arrangement.	9
Communicate results by formal written reports.	9
Measure performance against predetermined goals.	7
Solicit feedback from other stakeholders.	5
Hold frequent discussions and updates.	3
Use checklists to indicate task completion.	1
Total	34

Note. The number of methods mentioned by superintendents ranged from 2 to 5.

Methods

Personnel were responsible for the evaluation of those employees who reported to them in 70% of the cases. One respondent stated, "I evaluate the five key people that report to me . . . they in turn are expected to evaluate all people reporting to them." Similarly another stated, "The board evaluates me, I evaluate associate superintendents, the associates evaluate principals, principals evaluate teachers, and teachers evaluate students."

Central office staff were evaluated annually in some of the school systems. Formal and informal components were built into the evaluation processes. Most senior administrative, central office personnel were given formal "job descriptions" specifying their areas of responsibility. In addition, jurisdictions established annual system goals. The accomplishment of the individual's goals facilitated the accomplishment of the system's goals. Some systems required their personnel to develop an "annual management plan" based on the goals that were assigned. They were then assessed on how well they met these "targets." In a number of cases, goals were not simply assigned and then checked for accomplishment at the end of the year; instead there was constant interaction, and evaluations were ongoing. "There's not this big, once in a year, magic moment when the knife comes out of the air and a decision is made; its fluid, it's always going on, [we're] always looking at evaluation," remarked a superintendent.

In addition to measuring performance against predetermined goals, superintendents relied heavily on the feedback of others during the evaluation process. One superintendent stated, "I go to all schools, sit down with all principals, with the full knowledge of [the central office staff member being evaluated] and say do you understand his role? Do you see a congruence between what he does in school and his specified role?" He added, "I ask a lot of pointed questions, but they're all at the professional level." The evaluated staff were permitted to see all feedback with the names of respondents withheld. Another reported that, "Throughout the year I make it a point of discussing with my administrative colleagues in the schools how well things are going. I get feedback informally in that sense." In one school system, the superintendent distributed evaluation surveys to 10 employees who were subordinate to the staff member being evaluated. The completed documents were collected, analyzed, and their findings reported to the person being assessed. Another respondent met frequently with his central office administrators, especially after board meetings, to perform a self analysis of their performance. Strong and weak performances were duly noted. "And of course I have my own perception, which is included in any evaluation," stated one superintendent.

Submissions of formal, written documents were the final step in the process. Evaluated staff were given the opportunity to have extensive discussions relative to these reports. One respondent stated, "We have what we call pre-conferencing and post-conferencing after the report is written." Another stated, "I give them feedback at the end of the year, informing them in writing of their strengths and weaknesses, and clearly outlining ways and means of improving their performance."

One superintendent compiled a "checklist" after each board meeting, indicating the items which had to be done, the action which had to be taken, the target date, and who was going to do it. He stated, "That's a method of monitoring progress of each individual which is used as a part of the annual evaluation." In another system, merit pay was determined on the basis of evaluation results. The superintendent stated, "Their assessments, their supervision or evaluation is virtually for the purpose of assisting us in remunerating them in an appropriate way."

In summary, central office evaluations in all systems follow a similar pattern, with some deviations as noted. Evaluators evaluated staff who report to them. Data were collected by utilizing formal and informal means. Evaluators communicated the true results of the evaluation process, but at the same time protected the confidentiality of respondents. Written reports were filed in most cases. These reports were well-balanced, with strengths and weaknesses duly noted. In the event of weaknesses, recommendations were made to correct them. Evaluation and accountability measures were widely used in these districts. Larger districts had very sophisticated policies in place, while smaller ones had processes of less sophistication.

Evaluations of Principals

Principals in all 13 school systems were evaluated. The methods used and their frequencies are shown in Table 7.3. Below is presented a detailed account of the evaluation of principals as reported by superintendents and as gleaned from an evaluation of school board policy documents.

Methods

An analysis of principal evaluation policies clearly demonstrated that boards recognized this position as one of leadership, and as "key" in operating effective schools. In one school board's policy it was stated that, "The principal is the educational leader in the school and as such is responsible for the overall operation of the school." In another it stated, "The principal assumes several administrative and managerial functions, but the major role should be that of an instructional leader." This meant, among other things, that principals were primarily responsible for the development of sound teaching-learning situations, that effective instructional programs were in place, to ensure that students grew and developed to their maximum potential.

Superintendents in 77% of the systems took an active role in the evaluation of principals. One respondent acknowledged that, "Principal assessments are time consuming, but well worth the time because it helps me learn more about individuals and their schools . . . it's one of the few opportunities I have to get some direct involvement." In one rural system consisting of small schools, principals were evaluated as teachers only because most of them taught full time. Only one superintendent indicated that he was not

Table 7.3

Frequency Distribution of Mention of Methods Used to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Principals

Methods	f
Evaluated by superintendents personally.	10
Performance measured against agreed-upon predetermined goals.	5
Evaluations are cyclic (3-5 years).	4
Evaluations performed annually.	4
Use feedback solicited from teachers.	4
Performance measured against board-established criteria.	2
Evaluations conducted as part of school evaluations.	2
Use informal assessments.	2
Evaluated by assistant superintendents only.	2
Written reports submitted.	2
Questionnaires administered to students.	2
Evaluated as teachers only.	1
Total	40

Note. The number of methods mentioned by superintendents ranged from 1 to 8.

personally involved in principal evaluations. In this school system, principals were evaluated by assistant superintendents.

Most principals were frequently formally evaluated. In 31% of the jurisdictions, principals were evaluated annually; in another 31% of the cases they were evaluated in three to five year cycles. When whole school systems were evaluated each principal was subject to an appraisal. Newly appointed principals were placed on probation for at least one year, during which time thorough assessments were made.

An analysis of documents and transcripts revealed that school systems used two fundamentally different methods in their evaluations of principals. In one process, principals' performance was judged or measured against some criteria. As well, superintendents and principals jointly set unique, school goals, subdivided these goals into manageable performance objectives and agreed on some measuring instruments which would indicate the degree of success. This second procedure was operationalized in a number of ways. In one district, the superintendent met with all principals being evaluated early in the school year to establish goals being evaluated. In another system, principals presented a "management plan." After agreement was reached on that plan they proceeded to collect data upon which to judge performances. In this instance, each principal produced a unique management plan for his school.

A variety of means was used to collect data upon which to judge performance. In three districts, the principal's performance was assessed as part of the total school evaluation. One superintendent stated, "We have a leadership evaluation, so its of the school leadership not only of the principal." In this case, the leadership was assessed by a team comprised of internal and external evaluators. One respondent stated that, "This formal school evaluation became a public document, so there's a public release of the effectiveness of the administration of the school." However, he realized that there was a need for a more thorough report for the principal than the one released to the public.

Formal, solicited feedback from teachers via questionnaires and interviews was an important procedure in the assessment of principals' performance in 31% of the systems. These data were analyzed and the findings communicated to principals. In only two cases was formal feedback from students considered important in principal assessments; even then, students were not asked questions directly related to the principal. One respondent stated, "We don't specifically say this is on the school principal; it's a general questionnaire with some implanted questions."

Some superintendents relied on informal assessments. One respondent with considerable tenure stated:

> of course, I judge them every time I see them. I judge them on everything I see, and I judge them from any source of information I can get. I tell them that I'll take any information when I'm making a judgment about you, but I won't do it behind your back.

In gathering informal data, superintendents visited the schools and talked to teachers and students. In addition to receiving informal feedback on principals, these visits provided an opportunity to meet teachers and students. Another stated that "Another way of evaluating a principal is to [ask the question] 'how is the school doing'?" There was an assumed correlation between the performance of the school and the principal.

In one system, principals did not undergo an evaluation. The superintendent hastened to add though, "In informal ways I give them feedback." In all other systems, formal procedures had been developed and were operating. Principals were given timely feedback throughout the year and a final comprehensive written report at the end.

In summary, principals underwent frequent, intense, and thorough evaluations. Superintendents were heavily involved in these assessments. Most principals were evaluated in their own right, but in a few cases these evaluations were included as a part of the school evaluation. Systems used two fundamentally different approaches in the evaluations of principals: first, principals' performance was assessed in relationship to established board criteria, and second, principals, in cooperation with superintendents, decided upon their own criteria and how their performance on them was going to be assessed. Data were gathered by formal discussions with principals, staff interviews, staff questionnaires, public surveys, student questionnaires, and from school visits and observations. At the end of the process, principals were issued formal written reports.

Evaluation of Teachers

All 13 school systems had detailed and comprehensive teacher evaluation packages. An examination of these documents and an analysis of the interview transcripts revealed that there were many similarities. The policies all specified who was to be evaluated, when, where and how. The methods used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers and their frequencies are shown in Table 7.4.

Methods

Section 15(h) of the 1988 Alberta School Act holds principals responsible for the evaluation of teachers. It states in part: "A principal of a school must evaluate or provide for the evaluation of the teachers employed in the school." School systems are responsible for providing the highest possible quality of education to all students in their jurisdictions. Consistent with this policy, Alberta Education requires each school system to develop and implement policies, guidelines, and procedures to evaluate teachers. Evaluations had basically two purposes--formative and summative. Formative purposes were to promote, achieve, and maintain high standards of instruction; to recognize the value and worth of teachers; to communicate to the teachers the system's expectations; to provide support and professional assistance to teachers; and to recognize that the growth and achievement of students were of paramount importance. Summative evaluations were conducted for the purpose of making administrative decisions such as placements, transfers, retentions, promotions, permanent certifications, continuous contracts, and salary increments. As stated in one teacher evaluation document, "Supervision and evaluation of personnel are

Table 7.4

Frequency Distribution of Mention of Methods Used to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Teachers

Methods	f
Use principals as primary evaluators.	11
Tenured teachers are ordinarily evaluated in 3-5 year cycles.	9
Central office personnel are involved with difficult cases.	8
Interim and final written reports are submitted.	3
Staff development experiences are provided to teachers evaluated.	3
Involve the teachers' association in difficult cases.	2
Total	36

Note. The number of methods mentioned by superintendents ranged from 1 to 6.

important elements in respect to the pursuit of quality education, because it is through this means that the effectiveness of personnel may be appraised."

Principals were the primary evaluators of teachers in 85% of the systems . Only one school system did not require principals to evaluate teachers. In this "small" school system the assistant superintendent performed the evaluations of all teachers. Probationary teachers seeking permanent certification were almost always evaluated by both principals and central office administrators. One respondent emphasized that, "The central office gets heavily involved . . . in passing the system's judgment on whether the teacher will be able to teach permanently or not."

Central office personnel became involved, at the requests of principals, to assist with the evaluation of teachers who were experiencing difficulties. In cases where "teachers are struggling" and "the principal yells for help, then we'll be in there," stated a respondent. Another remarked, "if the principal identifies problems with a teacher, we are very actively involved--visiting the teacher's classroom, conducting formal evaluations, providing formal written feedback, and informal guidance." One superintendent viewed himself as the "hatchet" man in the case of the evaluation of tenured teachers who were experiencing severe difficulties. In recent years, superintendents were reluctant to become personally involved in teacher evaluations because their conscious level relative to "due process" was raised. Evaluation policies had due process and appeal procedures built into them. Superintendents were the first level of appeal for teachers who were dissatisfied with a decision emanating from an evaluation report. This appears to exclude the superintendent from the evaluation process. The respondents in this study did not have serious problems with teachers. None of the superintendents had ever gone to a board of reference hearing with a teacher.

Probationary teachers were evaluated every year but teachers with tenured contracts were evaluated in 3-5 year cycles. Only one system evaluated tenured teachers annually.

Principals, as primary evaluators were required to indicate in their plans who would be evaluated and when. They were expected to follow these plans, although allowances were made to extend the time "if you there were teachers whom you thought you needed to evaluate once, and they give you such problems that you have to spend day after day with them." Principals were given the flexibility to respond to more urgent needs. "A certain looseness was understood," indicated one superintendent.

Some school districts had undergone extensive in-service sessions with both evaluators and evaluatees. Prior to evaluation being a requirement in the 1988 Act, it was clear to one superintendent that "it had to happen." He stated that, "A big hurdle which had to be overcome was the Alberta Teachers' Association which was advocating that it was not the job of the school principal to evaluate a colleague." In addition, principals had to be trained in the techniques of teacher evaluation. Systems organized seminars and workshops to help in this training process. Principals attended these seminars, "talked about what had to be done, saw the need for it, they didn't want to do it, but they bought into it, and did it," remarked a superintendent.

In one district, teachers were given extensive in-service "in teaching strategies advocated to be effective by a number of studies," stated a superintendent. At these workshops, all teachers to be evaluated were given instruction in effective planning skills, effective methods of lesson preparation and presentation, effective interpersonal relationship skills, effective classroom management skills, effective student evaluation skills, and how to fulfil the co-curricular responsibilities. Following these district workshops, each individual school did detailed, follow-up, mini sessions where teachers explored the major concepts, and developed detailed strategies for use in their classrooms.

Some districts had moved into more than two or three observation periods per year. These observations were characterized by pre-conference sessions, observation periods, data analysis and interpretation stages, followed by post conferences with teachers. Some systems had introduced coaching for instruction and peer coaching techniques. One superintendent described coaching for instruction "as an in-depth evaluation every five years for every teacher." He reported, "It's a 10 page document written in prose," reporting not only what was satisfactory, but clearly spelling out what the teacher was to work on, and even recommending specific required background reading. If a teacher needed help, conferences were arranged among the assistant superintendents, the principal, and the teacher to plan detailed strategies to help the teacher as much as possible.

A number of school systems had introduced peer coaching programs as part of the teacher's annual appraisal. One respondent explained how the program operated: "the teacher selected a peer, together they developed a personal plan, they observed each other, and then presented a joint report . . . on the outcome of their experiences in the plan." To be helpful, peer coaches should possess "specific skills, knowledge and positive attitudes, be credible, supportive, facilitative, and available" as reported in one of the documents. The basic goal of the program was "to provide teachers support, encouragement, resources, and training in the knowledge and skills as of their professional career."

Two superintendents engaged the services of The Alberta Teachers' Association if the school board evaluation processes were unsuccessful. One respondent remarked, "when we've worked at it for awhile, and we feel we're not gaining ground, I get the professional organization involved." Teachers were encouraged to solicit the services of the association because it was "now to the stage where we're building an additional book and we want this person removed from our district," one stated.

In addition to following the formal evaluation procedures, a number of superintendents indicated that evaluators used informal means such as discussions with other teachers, board members, parents, and students. Feedback from these informal contacts were not part of the formal evaluation process, but admittedly, "form an impression upon the evaluators mind," as one respondent indicated.

Classroom visits were mainly scheduled, but some superintendents reported that unscheduled visits were indeed held. One respondent felt that the reason for these unscheduled classroom visits was "to ensure that teachers are not uptight . . . they seem to be much more natural in their delivery and dealing with kids when they're not aware that someone is coming to evaluate them; so our administrators walk in, unannounced, sit down, and observe."

A majority of superintendents reported that at the completion of the evaluation session the results were presented to teachers for their signatures. These reports were used for both formative and summative purposes. The final report was placed on the teachers personnel file.

In summary, probationary teachers were evaluated annually, while tenured teachers were generally evaluated every 3-5 years. Principals were the primary evaluators of teachers. Central office personnel became involved when teachers were experiencing difficulties. Some boards provided extensive in-service sessions to evaluators on the purposes and techniques of evaluation. A few conducted in-service sessions with teachers to ensure a successful evaluation experience. Most evaluations consisted of two or three observation periods annually, but some boards had introduced "coaching for instruction" and "peer coaching." These methods involved longer durations and provided more helpful experiences to teachers. Effective superintendents were not in the habit of proceeding to third party (board of reference) to settle disagreements, although some engaged the services of The Alberta Teachers' Association when attempting to satisfactorily resolve difficult situations.

Chapter Summary

The methods by which superintendents evaluated the effectiveness of programs, central office personnel, school administrators, and teachers were presented and discussed in this chapter.

The findings clearly showed that school systems were heavily involved in the evaluation of educational programs. Indicators of program effectiveness could be classified as either "hard" and "soft" type. Comments from parents, teacher comments, scores on teacher made tests, and the results of staff evaluations are referred to as soft type indicators. Student scores on achievement tests, diploma exams, Canadian Test of Basic Skills, and dropout rates are of the more objective harder type indicators of program effectiveness. Programs were evaluated in cycles, usually by utilizing internal and external evaluators. These teams of experienced educators spent considerable time gathering, analyzing, and categorizing data into manageable units. Comprehensive reports detailing the findings and offering commendations and recommendations aimed at program improvement or change were then presented.

Superintendents were personally involved in the evaluation of assistant superintendents and principals. These district administrators were sometimes evaluated annually, but certainly every three to five years. The results of their evaluations were based upon solicited feedback from questionnaires, informal discussions, and observations. The performance of evaluatees were either judged against established board criteria or measured against agreed upon goals. These goals were further partitioned into manageable performance objectives. Following which, measuring instruments or indicators of success were agreed upon.

Principals were the primary evaluators of teachers. Superintendents and assistant superintendents became involved at the invitation of principals to work with teachers who were experiencing difficulties. Each of the school systems had developed teacher evaluation packages setting forth basic assumptions and outlining in a fair amount of detail the procedures to be followed. Probationary teachers were evaluated annually, while tenured teachers were evaluated less frequently.

Chapter 8

INTERACTIONS

This chapter presents the findings related to Questions 6, 7, and 16 on the interview schedule:

6. Please describe the nature of your interactions with each of the following groups as you attempt to achieve your priorities:
   - (a) school board chairman
   - (b) other school board members
   - (c) secretary-treasurer
   - (d) other central office staff (e.g., assistant superintendents)
   - (e) principals
   - (f) teachers
   - (g) students
   - (h) community (e.g.. Chamber of Commerce, service clubs)
   - (i) Alberta Education
     - (i) Central Office
     - (ii) Regional Office
   - (j) Conference of Alberta School Superintendents
   - (k) Alberta School Trustees Association
   - (l) Alberta Teachers' Association
   - (m) your support staff
   - (n) others

7. (a) Please describe your preferred style of involvement in school board meetings.
   (b) How are the agendas for your board meetings established?

16. (a) On average, how many hours per week do you spend in schools?
    (b) In which activities do you usually become involved during your school visits?

Nature of Interactions with Constituent Groups

Superintendents interacted with many individuals and groups in the performance of their duties. Aspects of these interactions are discussed below.

School Board Chairmen

School boards were composed of 5 to 19 members. They held regular meetings, either bi-weekly or monthly. Counties and divisions, because they encompassed large geographical areas comprised of small rural towns and villages, required larger numbers of trustees than school districts to provide adequate representation.

Chairmen and superintendents interacted quite frequently. Chairmen were not in any way considered inconsequential. Frequent telephone conversations with board chairmen were held by 92% of the superintendents. Superintendents and chairmen "felt quite free to call each other at anytime." Most superintendents indicated they were in contact with the chairman at least once per week, while one reported "we're probably in contact, three, four, five times a week." Another reported, "Any time I feel like getting in touch with the chairman, I have the understanding he is ready to talk or listen." One respondent phoned the chairman whenever he thought "there was some problem afoot that was likely to disrupt what we were doing." In terms of the type of issues discussed one superintendent stated:

> they're all the way from putting in a new water fountain in a small school where the parents are upset over the quality of water to dealing with a teacher who has gone to the human rights commission over not being given a principalship because he feels there was gender discrimination.

Superintendents made every effort to inform the chairmen personally of any crises before they could be heard from other sources. One stated, "There's one thing I've learned over the years; that is, chairmen don't like turning on their radio or going downtown and hearing what happened in the system." They expected to be kept informed by their chief executive officers.

In addition to numerous telephone conversations, superintendents and chairmen interacted frequently while attending the same conferences and workshops. Chairmen relayed to superintendents the kinds of professional development activities they wished to attend, and superintendents worked out the logistics. The themes presented at these conferences were often used as springboards or "take-off points" for new initiatives to be taken within systems.

Superintendents and chairmen met prior to board meetings to examine agendas in 69% of the systems. One superintendent commented that:

> Before every board meeting, I go over the agenda briefing the chairman about the background, the purpose of the item; we talk about eventualities that may arise, we talk about procedural matters that may surround the case. I get a lot of feedback on what he anticipates to be the questions from trustees.

Superintendents acquainted chairmen with agendas prior to meetings to give the chairman a higher profile at the meeting. One remarked that "I want the board to look in charge, I want the board to look good publicly, I don't want them to fumble, especially the chairman. It's as much in my interest as in theirs."

Some superintendents encouraged chairmen to accompany them to schools. One noted, "It's a hard thing to get them to do. I'm usually able to get the beginning chairmen to accompany me, but after that I can't get them in the schools very easily."

Only two superintendents reported any sort of social relationship with the chairmen. In one case, the chairman happened to be a member of the same local service organization as the superintendent, but superintendents and chairmen generally did not appear to socialize to any great extent.

In summary, superintendents considered the position of chairman crucial to operating an effective educational system. Chairmen were typically the best informed trustees. Problems, concerns, and crisis situations of any major significance were brought to their attention. Board agendas were thoroughly reviewed with them prior to meetings to eliminate any surprises in the boardroom. Superintendents assumed a major role in ensuring that board meetings operated smoothly. They openly solicited feedback from chairmen on the appropriateness of agenda items and on the relevancy of the type and amount of information to be given under each item. In the interest of operating boards smoothly and effectively, superintendents and chairman interacted frequently.

Other School Board Members

Superintendents met with trustees in formal board meetings, either bi-weekly or monthly. In addition, they often met in committee. Outside of meetings, there was considerable interaction between superintendents and individual trustees, but less than with the chairmen. Superintendents or their senior administrators frequently contacted trustees to keep them informed of issues or problems which occurred in their local areas. One "phoned them as often as he had time and of course when it was relevant to do so." Trustees kept themselves informed of system happenings between meetings by frequently visiting the central offices.

Trustees were often very concerned about issues in their own local community. One superintendent provided this information:

> Work with individual board members tends to be more on local issues. We use the board member as the person who's aware of what's happening in the community. It's not uncommon for a board member to call and say that he or she has been contacted by a parent.

In one system, local board members were involved in selecting a principal for the school. In another, they were involved with the appointment of a caretaker because "it's a bit of a local issue," stated the superintendent. Trustees became involved in local issues especially if these issues were of a concern to constituents.

Superintendents and their assistants were frequently engaged in explaining organizational charts, board policies, provincial educational structures, and various positional papers to newly elected trustees. After this initial overload, trustees were continually updated and informed of any changes.

Superintendents generally did not socialize with trustees. One stated, "I've made a point of not developing social friendships with trustees. If you do you create a basis for mistrust; mistrust doesn't have to be there, but it can be perceived, and if its perceived, the damage is done, so I try to stay out of that situation." Another stated, "We try to keep a very friendly relationship [with trustees], but at the same time we keep a respectful distance." This same superintendent stated that, "At board meetings we lay the information before them, step back, and stay out of the road. We think our role is to provide information."

Trustees often phoned if they had individual concerns or if their constituents were concerned about issues. One superintendent preferred that "trustees contact him, inform him of the issue, and leave the how of dealing with it to me." It was considered good practice to have ongoing interaction with all trustees. The amount of interaction varied from trustee to trustee, but superintendents maintained open-door and open-phone policies with them, attempting to maintain a good rapport with all board members.

Secretary-Treasurer

Secretary-treasurers were the main fiscal advisers to superintendents. Except in county systems, they were directly responsible to the superintendent for the coordination of the financial operations of school systems. As members of the senior administrative staff, they operated at the same level in the organizational structure as assistant superintendents. In the county systems, however, secretary-treasurers were responsible to the county commissioner and not to superintendents. In this case, assistant secretary-treasurers often worked closely with superintendents.

Secretary-treasurers or assistant secretary-treasurers worked very closely with superintendents to ensure the smooth operation of the system. As one superintendent reported

> we work a lot together; he bounces lots of financial notions off me. I expect him to be the financial watchdog and inform me when we are reaching our financial limits, or if one department is suggesting extra expenditure.

Superintendents were responsible and accountable to boards for the budgets, but secretary treasurers did detailed budgeting and accounting. One insisted that, "I will not rob my school time to crunch numbers, or count salary units. I like to make the educational decisions, so if something is important educationally, he's expected to find the funds for it."

Secretary-treasurers generally recorded the minutes at meetings. In one system, the secretary treasurer recorded minutes of principals' meetings, central office administrators' meetings, board committee meetings, and board meetings.

Two superintendents made a point of meeting secretary treasurers at their own offices. This was perceived to give the job a higher profile. Secretary-treasurers were members of the "administrative council" or the "superintendent's team" and therefore were paid essentially the same salary as assistant superintendents. One superintendent felt, because they were on the same level, they should be paid the same.

Secretary-treasurers, in addition to having strong accounting and budgeting backgrounds, often had a keen interest in educational affairs. One superintendent echoed this when he stated, "The secretary treasurer has taken a keen interest in the whole matter of strategic planning, stress management, and things like that; we have a common bond, so we do a lot of of talking back and forth." He went on to say, "He's very much a black and white sort of person and I'm more of a global individual, but we respect each others strengths."

In summary, secretary-treasurers had frequent and ongoing interactions with superintendents. They recorded minutes of board meetings, and participated in weekly central office meetings. Their offices were usually located immediately adjacent to the superintendents', there were open door policies, and interaction between the two offices was encouraged. They were responsible and held accountable for financial management, a major area, vital to the operation of the educational system.

Other Central Office Staff

In addition to secretary treasurers, some central offices were staffed with assistant superintendents, program directors, accountants, transportation foremen, maintenance directors, and secretaries. Superintendents interacted mostly with assistant superintendents.

Many of the comments previously made relative to secretary-treasurers, also apply to assistant superintendents. There was constant and continuous interaction between superintendents and their assistants. In larger school systems, formal weekly meetings were held, while in smaller systems, with fewer employees, most of the items were dealt with as they arose, rather than delayed until a formal meeting. "There's a lot of popping into a person's office, sort of keeping each other informed," stated one respondent. Another stated, "We have our periodic formal meeting and then we have our informal interactions." These informal interactions often took place in the assistant superintendents' offices. One stated, "I go to their offices more than I expect them to come here . . . it creates an interesting climate, I do it quite purposefully."

Because smaller systems did not have enough expert staff at their central offices to provide all the administrative and program services needed by schools, they contracted services, either from Alberta Education, or from private enterprise. Those who were in close proximity to Regional Offices were more prone to solicit the services of Alberta Education, while those in outlying areas relied more heavily on private enterprise. One small school system rotated its principals annually at central office. This afforded principals the opportunity to develop a system perspective, while at the same time providing a much needed service.

Areas of responsibility were assigned to assistant superintendents by superintendents. They were given corresponding authority with this responsibility. One superintendent stated, "My style is after I delegate I try not to mess in their areas, but sometimes I have a very tough time not doing so, because I like to keep on top of what's going on." Another said, "I don't make decisions for assistant superintendents; I'll give them my opinion, but they have to make their own decisions."

Assistant superintendents had ready and easy access to superintendents because they were in "line" positions directly responsible to them. Some superintendents visited assistant's offices while others "left their doors open" to demonstrate accessibility. One stated, "I've got a staff that needs to talk. They will watch for me, and if I have a moment they're right in; it's important to be available to them."

Principals

Most organizational charts showed that principals reported directly to superintendents and assistant superintendents.

Superintendents and principals interacted quite frequently. Telephone conversations were held almost daily; rarely did superintendents go beyond a week without having a discussion by telephone with each principal in the system. One stated, "I have a standing rule; if a principal phones, I talk to him."

Monthly meetings, lasting all day, were held between central office staffs and all principals in 70% of the school systems. Only one system, with a number of small schools, held principals' meetings outside of school hours "because principals were mostly teaching and did not want to lose time from their classes," stated the superintendent. In this case, principals held supper meetings, which were funded by the board. These meetings were usually chaired by superintendents because "they wanted to give the system perspective," but occasionally were chaired by principals on a rotating basis.

A variety of items were discussed at these meetings. In one system, "There was a big focus on professional development, some administrative concerns, and the interpretation of board policies." Another reported, "These meetings are not as two-way as I would like; it's more of my giving information and they receiving it." This, he suggested, could be overcome by placing fewer items on the agenda and allocating more time for discussions. Some districts were heavily involved in leadership development with principals. The universities and The Alberta Teachers' Association were often engaged to help with these principal development sessions.

In addition to the regular monthly meetings and frequent telephone conversations, superintendents visited schools periodically. During these visits, they invariably ended up in the principal's office. One stated that, "Principals want to capitalize on all your time. Unless I say, 'It's recess time, I would like to go to the staff room, and see teachers,' I would spend all of my time in their offices." Another stated, "If I go to the school, we talk about issues and the more I'm there, the more willing they are to share other issues that have emerged, not just the day-to-day problems." He went on to say, "I'm busy and it's hard for me to slow down to hear those things, but if I'm in the schools I hear them better than if I'm not." By visiting schools, superintendents showed that they were not only interested in the principals' professional performance, but also in them personally. One respondent observed, "If you want to create interest you show that your interested." Principals were afforded the opportunity to talk about themselves, their plans, and their aspirations.

Principals were considered by superintendents to be very important to the effectiveness of the whole organization, and were given special attention. In one school system, a dinner for all principals and trustees was held annually. On that occasion, the superintendent took advantage of the opportunity to tell them:

> We know your jobs are getting tougher, it's hell out there at times and we appreciate how you handle things. Because if you're not doing your job, those of us at central office are unable to do our jobs and we'd be overrun with problems.

In another school system, principals were involved in board and committee meetings and were invited to make presentations to the board, giving a clear message that they were a part of the decision making team.

Principals were given considerable latitude in operating their schools. Policies were provided, of course, but beyond that, "They handled virtually everything themselves; we do not interfere with the operation unless they ask for help" a superintendent said.

In summary, superintendents made themselves readily available to principals who occupied crucial positions in the school system. Superintendents and principals interacted frequently by telephone, and by meeting regularly. In addition, superintendents frequently visited schools and met with principals. Superintendents were available for advice, but refused "to be drawn into the trap of telling them what they should do." They helped principals think through issues and problems by engaging them in discussions concerning the different alternatives surrounding a decision, but the decision was invariably left to them.

Teachers

Superintendents had less contact with individual teachers than with principals, but nevertheless, there was considerable interaction.

All superintendents visited schools frequently; while at the school they spent limited time in classrooms. Most visits were unannounced, and lasted from 10-20 minute. One superintendent said, "Because of my constant visits to schools totally unannounced, there's no apprehension on the part of the teachers." One superintendent admitted that, "One thing that I'm faulted on year after year is not enough contact with teachers" even though this respondent made a point of "going into each classroom for a few minutes." They did not ordinarily evaluate teachers, unless they were experiencing difficulties. There were exceptions to this, of course. One superintendent performed 35-40 evaluations every year, which required him to be in classrooms for extended periods of time. In two larger school systems, it was virtually impossible for the superintendents to personally visit all teachers in any given year. In these cases, they concentrated on only a fraction of the schools each year; over a cycle of three or four years visits were made to all classrooms.

In their quest for teacher contact, superintendents often visited staff rooms during recess times, during lunch breaks, or after school. At these times, they conversed with teachers informally and gave them the opportunity to raise any questions they might have. Visits to staff rooms were appreciated by teachers and enjoyed by superintendents. One superintendent stated, "When I walk into staff rooms its always friendly, I'm always welcomed." Some superintendents took bagged lunches to schools and had their midday meals with teachers.

Superintendents frequently attended school staff meetings. One stated, "During this current year, I've booked myself into 10 staff meetings where I will participate in discussions."

In addition to the general types of interactions presented above, individual superintendents had their own techniques of developing and maintaining meaningful interactions with teachers. One noted, "We have a lot of meetings where teachers are involved--we have board-teacher advisory committee meetings, I meet with the president of the ATA local and discuss the areas where we can work together." Most systems published newsletters which were circulated among all teachers as a way of maintaining minimal contact with teachers, generally giving reports on board meetings, updates on personnel, and a message from the superintendent. Another superintendent invited informal interaction and received many telephone calls from teachers. He felt that, "We've got enough trust in our system that principals feel quite comfortable with teachers talking directly to me, in the same way I feel comfortable with principals talking to trustees." In this same system, "think tank" sessions were held; "it's just a round table forum where teachers come and talk about what's happening in education," the superintendent stated. A number of superintendents interacted socially with groups of teachers at barbecues, golf courses, and planned social gatherings at schools.

Another superintendent considered himself an innovator and offered encouragement to teachers who tried new approaches in the classroom. Teachers often visited his office to give progress reports. At these times, the superintendent showed support for what they were involved with.

Another superintendent introduced "the education club tea party," to meet teachers every month to discuss issues affecting the educational system.

In summary, superintendents did not have as much contact with teachers as either they or teachers desired, but nevertheless there were many interactions. Superintendents visited classrooms, participated in staff meetings, evaluated teachers, attended social gatherings, involved teachers in committee meetings, distributed newsletters, and invited them to their offices. Superintendents had an insatiable desire to have meaningful interactions with teachers and it appears this was reciprocated. Superintendent/teacher interactions were believed to contribute to system effectiveness.

Students

A majority of superintendents attended graduations, awards nights, sporting events, Christmas concerns, and student theatrical events. They were often asked to make short speeches at these public gatherings. One superintendent observed, "I speak at all of them annually, and every year I try to have something original to say." Another felt that attending these public affairs "were the positive aspects of the job." It provided an opportunity to become involved in a positive way with the schools, and at the same time gave superintendents a forum from which to project the systems' image.

A majority visited classrooms, not only to meet teachers but also to touch base with students. Two superintendents taught classes to students during their school visits. One stated, "if there are highs in my job, they are when I can be with the kids in classrooms."

Some superintendents attended student council meetings and gave students the opportunity to express their concerns. Provision was also made for students to interact with trustees. In one school system, students attended policy committee meetings, in another they participated in simulated board meetings, and in yet another, arrangements were made for students to attend forums with trustees. One superintendent became involved with some personal complaints of students against teachers. The superintendent noted that, "Students were scrupulously honest in their responses."

Two superintendents regretted that they had to deal with students who were experiencing discipline problems, but "it came with the territory." One stated, "I know some of the strong students, but I also know some of the weak ones."

In summary, superintendents had less contact with students than they desired. They did, however, visit classrooms, attend public functions, deal with serious student problems, teach sporadically, and arrange for trustee-student interaction. students in some board committees.

Community

Superintendents were actively involved in community activities, quite frequently as members of the Chamber of Commerce, Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, or Toastmasters. Most were members of one community service organization, some were members of two, one superintendent was a member of every Chamber of Commerce within his system.

Membership in these organizations afforded superintendents the opportunity to meet members from the business community. One stated, "I really believe that the job we're doing is not entirely exclusively ours." They advocated the inter-agency approach to educational matters. The opportunity to speak at community service organization functions was welcomed, since it gave them the opportunity to present information relative to schools.

The local press usually attended formal board meetings and was encouraged to report information relative to student achievement on diploma exams and achievement tests.

Schools were encouraged to establish "councils." Superintendents attended these council meetings to project the system image and to respond to the questions of parents.

A number of superintendents were involved in coaching school teams, which again gave them an avenue to interact with parents. Church membership also afforded the opportunity for many to interact with a variety of people from the community. Also, superintendents had numerous informal interactions with community members on the streets, in the stores, and at other public functions.

Alberta Education

Alberta Education's main office was located in Edmonton. In addition, there were five regional offices strategically located throughout the province. The main office was primarily responsible for educational finance, especially the allocation of capital grants for the construction and renovation of schools, while the regional offices were more heavily involved in curriculum and instructional matters. Superintendents had much more contact with the regional office than the main office in Edmonton.

Most superintendents were very positive about their relationships with both the central and regional offices. They felt quite comfortable in calling the minister, the deputy or the assistant deputies when the need arose. They were pleased with the support and understanding they received especially in times of crisis.

Two small school systems were loud in their praise of the services they received in the core areas of curriculum and instruction from the regional offices. One stated, "We use them a lot; we're a small jurisdiction and we can't have expertise in all the different areas." Regional office personnel participated in some system evaluations. They were heavily involved in the updating and upgrading of teachers, especially in these smaller school jurisdictions.

Regional offices assigned one of their staff to liaise with each school system. Superintendents were extremely appreciative and positive about this sort of arrangement.

Liaison officers were seen as advocates. It was felt that there was at least one person at the regional office who was very familiar with what was happening in each of the local jurisdictions and was in a position to relay this to the central authority. A superintendent stated, "It makes me feel good that we have a representative down there, and if there's some press release, he'll phone and inform me."

In summary, superintendents appreciated the quality of advice and the attention given from both central and regional offices. One superintendent expressed the feelings of many when he stated, "They're an extremely valuable resource to me; there's some extremely talented people in these offices." The notion of having a liaison officer for each system was highly praised.

Conference of Alberta School Superintendents

All superintendents and assistant superintendents were members of the Conference of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS). CASS was divided into six regions to coincide with the boundaries of Alberta Regional Offices. Meetings of these two groups were usually held concurrently to conserve time and expenditure. In addition to the regional meetings, CASS held an annual meeting of all members each Spring.

Superintendents were updated at regional meetings on developments at Alberta Education. One felt that, "these meetings are not only valuable for the information you get, but also for the opportunity to interact with your colleagues." It was a time to share ideas. "Not only do you get an opportunity to get to know people on a collegial level, but after, you feel free to pick up the phone and call them at anytime." Similarly, another stated, "The advantages are in the sharing that goes on amongst superintendents, about problems, issues, and situations that have occurred in other jurisdictions that might be facing your jurisdiction in future." At these meetings, superintendents listened to presentations, shared policies, and examined pertinent documents, all with a view to adapting them to local circumstances. "The networking and the sharing was probably the biggest factor," according to one superintendent.

A number of respondents had been involved with CASS activities. Most were positive about these experiences. It gave them the opportunity to broaden their horizons by providing experience in chairing meetings and presenting to large groups. However, one superintendent issued a caution:

> I'd like to be more involved at the provincial level, but I've found that has to be a matter of priorities. There have been too many members of our group that have run into problems in their own system because they've been too actively involved at the provincial level. It's unfortunate that it is that way.

One superintendent expressed some reservations about the motives of some of the membership and the reason for their involvement in CASS. He stated, "I come from the perspective that I want to talk about education, students, programs, teaching, and schools; some of our members come from a selfish perspective of how to improve their personal contract." Educational issues were not pursued as vigorously by CASS as they should be, in the opinion of this superintendent.

Alberta School Trustees' Association

The Alberta School Trustees' Association (ASTA) is comprised of all trustees in the province. ASTA holds an Annual Convention to debate and decide on major issues. An executive committee conducts the affairs of the association between annual meetings. A full-time staff of highly trained professionals provide educational, legal, and negotiating services to superintendents and boards of trustees.

Superintendents had high praise for the legal services of ASTA. Its lawyers provided advice during contract negotiations, were used to interpret clauses in the various Collective Agreements, guided boards through grievance procedures, and if needed, defended their positions at Boards of Reference hearings. One superintendent stated, "Their legal services are a very critical resource and we use them very often."

Superintendents considered the services of ASTA to be indispensable to trustees. They were especially generous in their praise of the current leadership. One respondent stated, "Under this leadership the trustees of the province have made tremendous strides." Trustees were not always in tune with what was happening in education. "There was a time when trustees felt it was not necessary for them to be involved in educational matters, but they sure were careful with the money, "a respondent stated. He felt that this had changed recently--they were now concerned about such things as strategic planning, global educational issues, and providing positive leadership. ASTA had credibility with trustees--"They don't have any axe to grind; they're strictly advisory," stated one respondent. Only one superintendent spoke negatively about ASTA. After admitting that he frequently used their legal services, he asserted that, "I have problems with their political agenda. I think they should be a service organization of trustees and not have their own political agendas."

In addition to encouraging trustees to support and become involved with ASTA activities, a number of superintendents themselves were involved. They served on committees, made presentations, attended regional meetings, annual conventions, and spring workshops. One stated, "I think we need a strong organization that represents school boards in the province. I support and try to strengthen that organization, and I also encourage my board members to support and strengthen it."

Superintendents frequently discussed legal problems, negotiating positions, and major educational directions with the staff of ASTA. They believed ASTA had a voice in education which should be heard. They were positive about the organization and encouraged trustees to participate in its activities.

Alberta Teachers' Association

The objectives of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) were to advance the cause of education, to improve the teaching profession, to increase public interest in and support for education, and to cooperate with other bodies having similar objectives. Teachers holding certificates and employed by school boards, except superintendents and their senior officials were active members. The ATA is subdivided into a number of local associations normally coinciding with school system boundaries. A local may include teachers of more than one jurisdiction, but all teachers in any one school jurisdiction belong to the same local. The policies of the Association were set at the Annual Representative Assembly comprised of representatives from each local. Between Annual Assemblies the business of the association was conducted by 20 members known as the Provincial Executive Council.

All superintendents except one, reported either a good or excellent working relationship with the ATA, although some expressed concern about the unionist attitude of some of the members. One superintendent stated, "I don't agree on lots of things with them, but they're 90% a very fine group."

Superintendents, prior to their appointments, had all been teachers and therefore had been active members of ATA. One superintendent remarked, "I'm proud of the old boys club; I phone them, I advise them, they advise me, I accept their advice."

Only one superintendent expressed a negative view of the ATA. This view was held, he stated, because "ATA makes no bones about promoting their union position and it is much stronger than their professional one." He noted that, at one time there were serious discussions of breaking the ATA into two arms--the professional arm and the union arm. He had little difficulty in belonging to the professional arm because he had no problem subscribing to their code of ethics. The ATA he felt, had a reputation of protecting the "lowest common denominator," i.e., show me the weakest teacher, and that's who the ATA is supporting."

In addition to having good personal working relationships with the ATA, some superintendents fostered harmonious relationships between the board and the local associations. Trustees often met teachers at bargaining sessions.

In summary, superintendents had amicable relationships and frequent interactions with local and provincial ATA members individually and in committees. One stated:

> I don't view them as the opposition, they're one of the partners in education. In our system there is a need for all sorts of partnerships, but one of the strongest is with our teachers, because they're the people that are working first hand with the students.

Support Staff

Support staff included all those who were non-certificated, i.e., teacher aides, librarians, bus drivers, caretakers, maintenance personnel, cafeteria workers, and secretaries. Normally these people were responsible to secretary treasurers. They were normally unionized; only two superintendents indicated they were not; "We work a little extra hard at keeping them that way," stated one. Some systems had established employee-trustee committees, where support staffs were given formal avenues to discuss their wages, working conditions, or other issues. With this sort of arrangement, support staff had "some say in what happened; we try to maintain the same kind of relationship as with teachers." One superintendent stated, "We don't have a policy on teacher evaluation, we have a policy on personnel evaluation; we don't have a teacher/board party we have an employee appreciation party; they're all the same. We're all people, we're not jobs." Superintendents wanted support staff to feel they were integral and significant contributors to the effective operation of the organization.

Others

Five superintendents felt that all significant stakeholders had been identified in the question. The other eight described their interactions with the following groups: sister jurisdictions, town and city councils, Indian reservations, colleges and universities, school councils, parent groups, and student councils.

Superintendents arranged for joint meetings between trustees and the other agencies and groups listed above. Boards felt it was advisable to keep others informed of budgetary matters and major educational trusts. One stated, "We try to maintain a good working relationship with the city council because every time there's a tax increase they try to make it look like the school board is the only taxing authority in town."

Most systems, led school councils, which were established under the 1988 School Act. In one system, they were considered a strong organization at the school level, therefore, principals were expected to support and play a leading role in their establishment and operation. One superintendent was assured that, "The school is a stronger, more vital institution as a result of having parents involved." They channeled their efforts to the school level rather than the system level.

Universities and teacher colleges were the major training ground for teachers. It was therefore important to liaise with these institutions. In addition to providing trained teachers, the universities often released their staff to conduct workshops among the various school systems.

School Board Meetings

Superintendents' Style of Involvement

Superintendents prepared trustees, senior staff, and themselves for board meetings. Prior to meetings, most superintendents circulated detailed, written reports to all trustees, usually containing recommendations. This gave trustees the opportunity to be informed of major items prior to meetings, and enabled them to come prepared to engage in a meaningful debate. They were in a position to resolve issues by adopting the recommendations of superintendents, modifying them, or by taking a completely different course of action, but at least they were informed. One noted though, "I do sense from time to time that there has been a lack of reading of these reports beyond page one, or the reading is superficial, then some factors are missed in the debate." This superintendent had a stern warning for such trustees. He stated,"Trustees earn the right to sit at board tables;

that right requires them to exert effort to prepare themselves, or else they lose that right, not technically, or legally, but morally."

Chairmen were expected to be in control of board meetings and, as such, were expected to conduct the agenda in a timely and orderly fashion. Superintendents felt compelled to inform chairmen of the details of all issues coming before the board, thus giving chairmen the opportunity to portray the image that they and their trustees were clearly in control of the agenda and the issues under discussion. One superintendent remarked, "The board meeting is the trustees' meeting and not the superintendent's meeting." Trustees' involvement in presenting reports from policy committees forced them into leadership roles at board tables.

In 62% of the systems, superintendents stated that they were very active at board meetings. One remarked, "I talk a lot at board meetings; if I have a direction I think we should be going, I say so." Another considered himself the "information giver." His provision of information when requested, he believed, helped the board to make wise decisions. He stated, "I feel free to jump in and provide any information that might be lacking." Finally, another concluded, "I take a very active role in school board meetings; I sit at the front with the chairman, I'm encouraged, and am not reticent to take part in the debate." Although one superintendent preferred to take a "low-key" stance at board meeting, he was often unable to do so. His preference was "to be there and be available, just as a final check on something, to be a silent advisor, and slip the occasional note to the chairman if there was a procedural mix-up." He found though, that in reality he had to continually remind the chairman of other points of view, become publicly involved in debating almost every issue, thereby making the board appear to be a "rubber stamp."

Although, they were active and thorough in their preparations for board meetings, a low profile was held by five of the respondents. They either felt that sufficient information had been provided in background reports for boards to make decisions, or they involved their senior staff in reporting and debates. One superintendent remarked, "I try to involve the assistant superintendents and the secretary-treasurer, or if it's a committee where a trustee sits, the trustee will make the presentation." However, he felt he was in tune with all recommendations that went to the board, but he wanted to make it clear he was not the architect of them all. He cautioned that sometimes this works as a disadvantage because "trustees wonder whether or not I am doing anything, with all of these other people doing so many things." He advocated being there, being influential, but not necessarily "being the mouth." Another stated, "I speak when spoken to." This superintendent had a team of highly trained, highly competent, and highly professional senior administrative staff who could handle themselves quite competently at the board table, and with the press if need be. Another provided the board with written data. At the board meetings he was asked by the chairman to crystallize that data into manageable sections for trustee consumption.

Superintendents were often questioned by trustees on the details of policy proposals and problematic issues which occurred in districts. One felt it was very important for trustees to be given the chance to ask questions, and that he should be very honest with any answers. Another stated he "only answered questions when his senior staff got stuck; I'm the next level of answers, so to speak." Although superintendents often found themselves responding to questions, a number indicated they were not intimidated by it. One stated, "I like board members to ask questions, I think it's very healthy for them to challenge each other and to challenge me; I like honest, open, and direct communication."

One highly experienced superintendent of a medium-sized system observed that

> it's certainly been my experience that the less I can say, the more effective I am; I go into a meeting with a certain amount of influence and if I use it all in the first item, then when I get to the item I really want to influence, I don't have it."

He proceeded, "I keep a low profile, and then, when I do speak, I have more credibility." Superintendents had to have a sense of when their intervention would be influential at board meetings; a sense of timing was crucial.

In summary, superintendents insisted that good information packages, usually with recommendations, were placed in the hands of trustees prior to board meetings. They, or members of the senior staff were heavily involved in board meetings, although only about one half of the respondents took an active role at the board table; the others let the board meeting be a meeting of trustees, and not a meeting of the superintendents' team. After all the arguments had been put on the table, the board was expected to come up with the best decision. Boards had agendas, chairman introduced agenda items, and superintendents spoke to recommendations, or offered clarifications of items if requested. After the conclusion of debates, votes were taken to resolve issues.

Agenda Setting

All 13 superintendents had considerable control over the establishment of school board agendas. In all systems except one, they were given total responsibility for developing the first draft of the agenda. In developing drafts, superintendents involved their senior central office staffs, especially secretary-treasurers. In most cases, after the agenda had been drafted, superintendents met their chairmen to discuss the details of conducting meetings. Chairmen and other trustees were given the opportunity to add or delete items.

One superintendent had tried repeatedly to have an agenda committee established, but the trustees were so heavily involved in other committees that they were unable to find the time. Another large school system had an agenda committee comprised of the superintendent, chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary, but even in this school system, the senior staff were given the opportunity to draft an agenda prior to the meeting of the agenda committee.

Some districts had standard agendas which required minor adjustments from meeting to meeting. These agendas made provision for various committee reports, personnel reports, new business items, with space for "spotlights" on student awards and staff accomplishments.

In summary, superintendents first drafted board agendas in cooperation with their senior staffs and especially secretary-treasurers. The draft agenda was then reviewed with the chairman to receive and incorporate his suggestions. Agenda packages containing background reports, and if need be recommendations, were distributed to trustees prior to meetings. Chairmen were reluctant to add or delete items after the meeting commenced because "we try to avoid any surprises at the board table," stated a superintendent.

School Visits

On average, superintendents spent seven hours per week in schools, ranging from three to twelve hours. During these visits superintendents were involved in a variety of activities, but 85% of them interacted with the administration of the schools. Principals and superintendents "reviewed the whole operation of the school," stated one respondent, while another said that principals were given the opportunity to discuss any problems they had "from staff to furniture to the teacher that's having a problem in room 7.". In other cases, the principal and the superintendent did simple "walk throughs." At the end of the visit the principal invited commentary on what was observed. One superintendent stated, "then we share some observations with respect to good teaching and good classroom management."

During these school visits, 54% of the superintendents visited classrooms and interacted with teachers. They engaged in brief discussions, had a quick look at the curriculum, and got a sense of the quality of teaching taking place. In some of the small and medium-size school systems, they were involved in teacher evaluations necessitating the spending of more time with these teachers. Sometimes, just to be visible, they sat in staff rooms. One superintendent remarked, "I talk to teachers just to let them know who I am and that I care." After talking to the principal, one superintendent stated, "then I go and talk to teachers and visit classrooms and I help kids with their work; it's an excellent thing for me to do, it's my mental health trip."

In summary, superintendents enjoyed their frequent visits to schools. They almost always met principals in their offices. In addition, they interacted with teachers in their classrooms, in the hall-ways, and in staff rooms. They attended some student functions, and interacted with students on an informal basis.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings related to the nature of the superintendents interactions with different constituent groups, their preferred style of involvement at school board meetings, their involvement in setting board agendas, and the activities in which they become involved during their school visits.

Superintendents operate in a dynamic interactive milieu. They are expected to integrate all viewpoints into producing an effective educational system. It is this quest for understanding and appreciation of the different perspectives which brings superintendents into these varied relationships.

Although all were involved in planning for board meetings, superintendents were almost evenly divided on the amount of involvement they should have at these meetings. Some were actively involved and joined all debates, while others were more reticent and were willing to "let the board meeting be a meeting of trustees."

These superintendents averaged seven hours per week in schools. During these visits considerable time was spent with principals, some with teachers, and less with students. School visits were an extremely important function of superintendents' work.

Chapter 9

INFLUENCE, VALUES, AND PERSONAL LIFE

This chapter presents the findings related to Questions 8, 9, 14, 15, 17, and 18 on the interview schedule:

8. (a) What are the three most important bases of your influence when you deal with board members?
   (b) What are the three most important bases of your influence when you deal with other educators in your system?

9. (a) What are your most important personal values?
   (b) How do you try to ensure that these values are reflected in your school system?

14. How does your position as superintendent affect your personal life?

15. (a) Some observers have suggested that superintendents should be willing to make more innovative decisions in order to improve schooling. However, such actions can carry the risk of superintendents losing their jobs if the decisions have negative consequences. How can the need for educational change be balanced with the need for the superintendents' employment security?
   (b) How can superintendents be protected from the *consequences* of termination on short notice?

17. How did your method of operation change when superintendents were designated as "Chief Executive Officers" in the *1988 School Act*?

18. Please comment on any other relevant matters.

Bases of Influence When Dealing With Board Members

Superintendents used 18 different bases of influence in their dealings with board members. These are presented in Table 9.1. They relied on factors other than the authority of their positions to influence trustees. Only two superintendents mentioned this when discussing the question. One stated, "I don't think official authority of position is a basis for anything really" while another concluded, "I suppose my influence is based partly on my position. You can't deny that a superintendent has influence because of the position."

Table 9.1

Frequency of Mention of Bases of Influence Used in Dealing With Board Members

Bases of influence	f
Knowledge/information	9
Trust	8
Experience/track record	7
Openness and honesty	5
Effective communication	2
Respect as educational leader	2
Confidence of others	1
Relate decisions/recommendations to students	1
Reasonableness	1
Good sense	1
Being positive	1
Being logical	1
Appealing to agreed-upon beliefs and values	1
Total	40

Note. Twelve superintendents mentioned three bases of influence and one mentioned four.

Knowledge/Information

Superintendents seemed to be using the two words "knowledge" and "information" interchangeably. A distinction, therefore, has not been made for the purposes of these discussions. Knowledge, educational knowledge, or information was felt by 77% of the superintendents to be a most important base from which to influence board members. All superintendents were trained in teaching methodologies, and all had amassed volumes of detailed information relative to their own systems. They gathered information by holding numerous meetings, receiving many telephone calls, having countless individual interactions, and by just "keeping their ears to the ground."

Superintendents expressed their views on this base of influence in the following manner. One stated, "I believe in the old adage, knowledge is power and a most important base of influence is good information." He proceeded to say "knowledge and sound information are the three most important bases of influence." In other words, in the mind of this respondent no other bases existed or were necessary. Another stated, "If you want to convince the board of your convictions, you have to give them all the information you've got, i.e., you have to give them the pros and cons of the argument."

Boards were frequently confronted with masses of information. Report after report with reams of data was presented at their tables. Superintendents were expected to distill and succinctly present pertinent points or trends to trustees from this data. Most trustees were not inclined, nor did they wish to take the time to examine in detail all data. Superintendents had to place their own interpretations on the data; the degree to which trustees accepted these interpretations gave them influence. One respondent observed that "a very important base of influence is your ability to succinctly bring the picture into focus through skilfully utilizing data so that the board knows what the issue is, i.e., what's the background, what are the alternatives, what are the implications; and then help lead them in the decision making process." Another superintendent insisted that reports presented at board meetings be no longer than 3 pages, and if individual trustees desired more detailed information they could examine background reports located at board offices.

Trust

If they were going to influence board decisions, 62% of the superintendents strongly felt that trustees had to trust them. One stated, "I think they trust me, there's a strong level of trust." Another felt that trust was closely linked to confidence building. He stated, "You don't want a situation where the board members think the superintendent is trying to pull a fast one or is not presenting all the information." Yet another stated, "The trust relationship is extremely important for your credibility."

Experience/Track Record

Experience as an educator, or a successful track record, was one of the bases that 54% of the superintendents used to influence their boards. Only one superintendent felt that track record had nothing to do with it. He insisted that "every decision is made at this point in time, and the fact that I've been in the job this long doesn't mean a thing, if I [make a mistake] tomorrow . . . that's what I'll be judged on." However he acknowledged that your track record could help you in the case of a dismissal, but not in terms of doing the job. Others though, were more positive about relying on their track record. One stated, "I have experience in teaching virtually all grade levels and I can draw on that extensively." This same superintendent felt he had a track record of giving good sound advice for a long period of time, therefore trustees should have no reason to seriously question his motives on the issues currently under review. Another stated, "because I've made recommendations to them in the past, and it's worked, trustees feel it's coming from a good knowledge base."

Two superintendents felt that the successful track record of the whole school system was a base of influence they could rely upon. These two systems had traditions of students being successful, any changes advocated had to be seriously weighed, and only made after due consideration of the consequences. There should be no change, simply for the sake of change. This was especially true when systems had the support of their communities. Changes should not in any way diminish this base of support. One respondent stated, "A base of influence is the relative importance of our school system and the track record it has with the community." Another remarked that, "There are established traditions and policies in this school system as to how we do things, and I encourage them not to jump away from these established traditions and policies without first weighing the consequences." He was aware that too much reliance on past practices could stifle staff and trustee enthusiasm in looking at things differently, but still he advocated going through a process to ensure that previous practices got serious consideration.

Openness, Honesty, and Good Sense

Openness, honesty, and using a lot of good common sense was used by 46% of the superintendents to influence trustees . One stated, "If you're open, honest, and forthright; these are the things that are going to have an influence." Another stated, "Tell them the way it is; don't hide anything." Yet another stated, "First of all I have to be open and up front. I try not to have secrets."

Effective Communication

In order for superintendents to influence the direction of boards 15% felt they had to communicate their proposals very clearly to trustees. Trustees had to know the basis upon which superintendents were making recommendations and they had to be challenged to assess their future implications.

Respect as Educational Leaders

A base of influence for two superintendents was the respect that trustees had for them as educational leaders. This base of influence was closely related to track record, experience, and the building of a trusting relationship. One respondent expressed this notion as follows, "I think, that if trustees respect you, have a respect for the types of advice that you're giving, and respect your honesty in dealing with them, then you can influence their decisions."

Confidence

Trustee confidence in superintendents was not a given, it had to be earned. According to one respondent superintendents had to work hard at this confidence building. He stated, "The board has to have confidence in the superintendent and its something that you always have to work at, building confidence and maintaining it." This same superintendent viewed trust as closely linked to confidence building.

Relate Decisions/Recommendation to Students

The fundamental purpose of the educational system was to serve the needs of students. Trustees, superintendents, and others held their positions for this purpose. One superintendent found that

> a most useful technique of exerting influence on trustees is to remind them that we're talking about the lives of children and nothing else, when you get right down to it their hearts are in the right place. They're not fighting for personal gains.

This superintendent appealed to these sentiments when trying to influence board members.

Other Bases

Individual superintendents presented other bases they used to influence board members. These are discussed below.

One superintendent felt it was crucial to build up a good rapport with trustees. This rapport was enhanced by presenting honest information and rationalizing everything in the best interest of students. He emphasized that "as soon as they have doubts in their mind, you're in trouble." It was important for another superintendent to be reasonable in his recommendations and to feel confident that these recommendations were practical and would work; it was also advisable to keep your promises. This superintendent felt strongly that "they have to trust you, if they think you're trying to pull one over on them you've lost them, and if I say I'm going to do something, I do it."

Board members wanted to be assured that the decisions they made were in the best interest of students. It was also important for superintendents be positive and project a favorable image of the system. Staff in one system were reminded not to become negative of trustees, because they felt compelled to make political decisions. He indicated, "I try to instill in staff that as politicians they have needs and they want to serve their clientele."

In one school system, certain basic beliefs and values were agreed upon, which eventually appeared in policy documents. New policies and directions were argued for or against using these beliefs and values as a bases, any time trustees deviated from these they were reminded. It was a most powerful influence, according to this superintendent.

Finally, one superintendent relied upon logic, reason, and strong rationales as a basis for influencing board members.

Summary

To influence board members superintendents relied heavily upon accumulated knowledge/information, trust relationships, and the respect they personally had built up. This trust did not reside in their authoritative positions; it was based upon their track record or their experience. This track record consisted of presenting relevant information, being open, honest, reasonable, positive, logical, presenting strong rationales, keeping students in the forefront, continuously appealing to basic beliefs and values, being sensitive to the wishes of community, and being able to deliver on promises. One respondent summarized many of the bases when he stated "provide trustees with appropriate information after having established a basis of trust and also not being afraid to say 'I don't know.'"

Bases of Influence Used When Dealing With Other Educators

The bases of influence used by superintendents when dealing with other educators are shown in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2

Frequency of Mention of Bases of Influence Used in Dealing With Other Educators

Bases of Influence	**f**
Same as board members. (See Table 8.1.)	11x3 = 33
Valuing their opinions.	3
Asking people to perform tasks.	1
Demonstrating desirable performance.	1
Providing information and give time to deliberate.	1
Being credible.	1
Providing resources.	1
Being supportive.	1
Having advanced academic training.	1
Total	43

Notes. The same three bases of influence were used by 11 superintendents when dealing with educators as with board members. In addition, 10 different bases of influence were identified by several superintendents.

Same Bases as Those Used With Board Members

Superintendents, in 85% of the cases, used the same bases of influence when dealing with other educators as they used with board members. These will not be presented again in this section, instead only different emphasis and new bases will be reported. Generally, superintendents felt other educators had to trust and have confidence in their decisions in order for them to have influence. This trust and confidence had to be earned from a long history and practice of dealing openly, honestly, rationally, and reasonably with all employees. Superintendents who had influence had a record of espousing these virtues. Being appointed to the position or the position of superintendent was not a basis of influence except in the one case as already reported.

Value Others' Opinions

Three respondents influenced other educators by consulting with them, listening to their advice, and demonstrating to them that their opinions were indeed valued and important. One stated, "I now give [employees] more latitude, there's more consultation, I ask them for some direction before seeking their support." Another respondent stated, "Our employees trust that I will incorporate the opinions of those who are affected by my decisions before I make them." Yet another stated, "I try to convey to them that we value their opinions and that they have an important part to play in the whole process." This superintendent believed in team building, developing a team atmosphere, and involving staff in the decision making process. He felt there was a greater assurance in using this approach that staff would implement the policies of the board as intended. For example, committee of the support staff was involved in the selection of their own manager in one school system. After this involvement the staff felt compelled to make the appointee successful. The superintendent stated that, "You have no idea what this did for their morale; they'd do anything for that guy."

Asking People to Perform Tasks

"If influence means getting somebody to do something them you can influence them by simply asking," according to one superintendent. Good communication, supplying relevant information, along with a record of being honest and open were essential prerequisites to influencing when asking. Matching jobs with the interests and talents of staff also helped in influencing them. This same respondent felt that the authority he had, or the influence he could exert, often came from the people over whom he was trying to influence. He proceeded to say, "You get authority when they [employees] give it to you."

Demonstrating Desirable Performance

This base of influence revolved around superintendents not asking other educators to perform tasks which they themselves were not prepared to do. A superintendent stated, "If I'm reluctant to deal with a situation, it's highly unfair for me to request it of anybody else." Employees had to feel that the superintendent would only ask others in the organization to perform tasks which he himself would do.

Provide Information and Give Time to Deliberate

In planning for change, superintendents presented other educators with substantial information. So as not to appear to be "railroading," they gave time to employees to deliberate and analyze the implications of this information. Employees were perceived to be more subject to influencing if they had time to "internalize" and grasp all aspects of a proposal.

Being Credible

One superintendent proposed that, "To exert influence over employees you have to be perceived as being credible." This credibility could be fostered by presenting realistic recommendations, and further ensuring that the work being done was important and relevant to the success of the organization. Staff were not impressed with devoting their time to trivial matters.

Educational organizations required large amounts of resources to function successfully. Superintendents exercised considerable control over these resources; to be credible they "must provide the necessary resources in order for other educators in the system to do their work well." One respondent advocated that "superintendents should roll up their sleeves, get in there when the fighting gets tough, and be seen as someone who supports employees in their cause through direct action if needed" rather than taking a laid back approach.

In summary, superintendents used many of the same bases to influence educators as they used to influence board members. In addition, other educators were influenced by showing them that their opinions were valued, by simply asking them to perform tasks, by inculcating a feeling that they would not be asked to do things which the superintendent would not do himself, by giving them time to deliberate and consider requests, and by being credible at all times.

Personal Values

The 13 superintendents presented 18 personal values. These values and their frequencies are shown in Table 9.3. The methods used to reflect them are shown in Table 9.4.

Integrity and Honesty

Integrity was identified as a personal value by eight superintendents, while honesty was a value of seven. They reflected these values in their school systems by example, modelling, talking about them, encouraging others to discuss them, and addressing them through policy statements. One superintendent insisted that, "We try to ensure that what we do is honest, that first we're honest with people, and second we're honest with ourselves; if we can't do something, or don't know the answer, we say so." He added

"We try to ensure that nobody is hurt in our system as a result of those types of values." According to another teachers should also have intellectual integrity. They should always teach from an unbiased viewpoint, they should teach and not preach, and if teachers teach their biases they should state them clearly. He strongly felt that, "You should be honest in what you are teaching in the classroom." Finally, another superintendent continually reminded colleagues about the importance of being forthright and to communicate clearly. He remarked, "I keep saying it is important to be honest, it's important not to lie; when we go into a board meeting we want to be telling the absolute truth, to be completely honest, and be seen as a person with full integrity."

People's Contributions/Strengths

Of the superintendents 38% stated they valued the contributions, opinions, dedication, and strengths of others. One felt very strongly that people were capable, and if given the opportunity they wanted to be successful. He felt confident that, "people start off by wanting to do well, and if given suitable, direction, and scope they will do so." According to this superintendent, people need to have their contributions recognized and acknowledged by system officials.

Education/Children

Education, as a basis for change, was seen as an overriding value by 31% of the superintendents. One welcomed change but realized it sometimes placed undue pressure on employees. He wanted staff "to convey to children that education in itself meant change." Closely linked to education was the value for children. A superintendent stated, "My first responsibility is always to the child, not to ourselves, not to the school system, and not to the board." He wanted everybody to realize that every child was an individual and required unique and specific attention. These were clear ways of demonstrating to everybody in the system what he valued. Another became annoyed when students were being encouraged

Table 9.3

Frequency of Mention of Effects of the Superintendency Upon Personal Life

Effects on personal life	f	Total
Positive effects		
Provides opportunities for professional development.	5	
Provides opportunities for travel.	4	
Provides flexibility in schedules.	2	
Increases financial rewards.	2	
Improves home relationships.	1	
Provides power, excitement, recognition, influence, and a sense of accomplishment.	1	
Enables one to become more tolerant.	1	
Facilitates humbleness.	1	17
Negative effects		
Demands long-time commitments.	10	
Creates high stress.	4	
Creates a false sense of security.	1	
Does not permit a clear separation between the person and the position.	1	16
Total	33	33

Note. The number of effects mentioned by superintendents ranged from 2 to 6.

Table 9.4

Frequency of Mention of Most Important Personal Values of Superintendents

Value	f
Integrity	8
Honesty	7
People's contributions/strengths	5
Education/children	4
Hard work	3
Family	3
Positive attitudes	3
Respect of others	2
Teamwork	2
Sincerity	2
Fair play	1
Loyalty	1
Independence	1
Courage	1
My roots	1
Best I can be	1
Sense of humor	1
Caring for others	1
Total	47

Note. The number of values mentioned by superintendents ranged from 2 to 5.

by principals to leave school because it was in the student's own best interest. He stated, "I have said to principals, 'I don't know how you know that it's best for kids, I know its best for you, because you don't have to bother dealing with that kid anymore.'" In this case he felt schools were very unjust and did not operate in the best interest of children.

Hard Work

Three superintendents highly valued hard work by themselves and others. One got others to value hard work by working hard himself and by showing others that he valued their extra efforts. He stated "when people are recognized and appreciated for what they do, they keep on doing it." Hard work to another superintendent meant "doing whatever was necessary to get the job done and to expect the same from others."

Family

Three superintendents identified the value of the family unit, and stated that they believed in the role of the family. This was a personal value and one which the superintendents did not reflect in the school system. One stated, "I want my family to be successful," this attitude, he felt, probably influenced others in the system, especially in smaller communities where the private lives of superintendents are better known.

Positive Attitudes

Being positive themselves and projecting that image to others was a value identified by three superintendents. One stated "my orientation is to focus on the positive, build on the positive, keep your eye on the doughnut and not on the hole." Another projected a positive image "by looking to the future rather than looking back." To another, turning challenges into opportunities and having the confidence to do so was being positive. In order to project that feeling in the system he advocated that, "We challenge each other, take lots of risks, do not be afraid to innovate, introduce new programs, and allocate adequate financial resources when needed."

Respect of Others

Having the respect of others was a value of two superintendents. One stated "I am not simply referring to calling somebody Mr. or Mrs., I am talking about a respect for others opinions and respecting differences in people." Similarly another stated, "I try to treat everyone in this organization with respect, for them as individuals and for their ideas." This value was reflected in the school systems by delegating responsibility, implementing school based decision making, by consulting personnel, and by avoiding "top down" management.

Teamwork

Promoting collaboration or teamwork throughout the whole educational system was a value of two superintendents. This value was reflected in the system by creating the appropriate structures in order for it to take place. Principals were formed into a "network club" in one system. They were assembled by the superintendent, but they set their own agendas. At annual awards nights, teams as well as individuals were recognized for their accomplishments. A respondent stated, "We try to strengthen that whole concept of teaming, team building and collaboration."

Sincerity

Two superintendents felt it was important to be sincere and to be committed to whatever they were doing. One stated, "I would like for anyone associated with this school system to say, I can approach that individual, he's sincere." This value was reflected by listening when employees had concerns and by making difficult decisions when they had to be made.

Others

The following values were each suggested by one superintendent: fair play; loyalty; independence; courage; their roots; being the best they could be; having a sense of humor; and having a caring attitude.

The superintendent who valued fair play reflected this in his everyday dealings with people. He insisted on fairness. The lone superintendent who indicated that loyalty was an important personal value offered no suggestions as to how to reflect it in the school system. Another valued independence for himself and for others. This value was reflected by giving people latitude and letting them do the things they liked to do. He set high standards, but nevertheless "I try not to tell people how to do something, I say what I'd like to happen, but I leave the 'how' up to them," he said.

Having the courage to do what needs to be done and not backing off "when the going got rough" was a value held by one of the respondents. He felt that principals and others often gave up on issues because they became difficult. He expressed his concerns in the following manner, "I sometimes sit in a principals' meeting and somebody gets going about the fact that it's impossible to do something, pretty soon, the song is, well, it's impossible to do." Principals were encouraged to stretch their talents and abilities, and to recognize that certain issues were difficult to cope with, but they must stick with them. Encouragement was given to principals and others to accept and deal with challenges.

"Staying with your roots," i.e., being proud of your heritage, was a personal belief of one superintendent. This superintendent administered a separate school system, which according to him "was here for a specific purpose academically, morally, and socially." He went on to say, "It's incumbent upon me that we recognize these roots, because they are why we exist."

"Being the best I can be," or exerting myself to the fullest" was a value of another incumbent. This was achieved by setting very high personal goals which required him to extend himself to the limit. Another felt it was advisable to maintain a sense of humor and be able to laugh at yourself occasionally. Finally, for another respondent the caring aspect or caring for others must permeate everything one does. This was reflected "in decision making, by modelled it in your behavior, and by encouraging others to model caring in their behavior."

In summary, superintendents valued most highly integrity, honesty, the strengths and contributions of others, and the whole notion of education/children. Other personal values were presented but with less frequency. Many of these values were covertly rather than overtly reflected in their school systems.

Effects of the Superintendency Upon Personal Life

Most superintendents (77%) indicated that their jobs were well balanced between positive and negative aspects. Only two saw the job as mostly negative, while one seemed to be in a totally positive mode. The effects and their frequencies are shown in Table 9.5.

Positive Aspects

Initially when the question was asked almost all respondents started discussing the negative aspects of their jobs and only gave the positive aspects when they were specifically requested.

Superintendents' salaries were higher than were those of other staff in the same system. These increased financial rewards afforded them the opportunity to do more things than they could have done if they had stayed as teachers. However, they were not specific as to what they did with this extra income. One stated, "It has opened new opportunities that I may not have been able to take advantage of if I had earned less money."

The superintendency provided flexibility in scheduling, although there were serious time commitments. If they wanted to take a specific working day and spend it with their families, they could, provided they were willing to make up the time at a later date.

Happiness at work reflected positively upon relationships at home. One superintendent who enjoyed his job felt that the time commitments had "not been harmful to his marriage or family" because he enjoyed what he was doing and this "spilled over" in his home life.

Superintendents travelled throughout the continent to attend professional development sessions. This put them in touch with educators and others who were at the cutting edge of research and new approaches to administration. This travel and variety of interactions enabled them to build up a network of colleagues and friends who could be contacted to discuss issues and problems.

One superintendent liked the excitement, the recognition, the power, the influence, and the great things he could accomplish for students. This gave him personal satisfaction. Another liked what he was doing because it gave him the opportunity to personally grow in a number of ways. He felt he became more tolerant, although he suggested there were things he was intolerant about. In addition he admitted, "It's been a humbling type of thing, that one goes through when you go through the knocks of life, and I've gone through more of them as a superintendent, than if I had stayed as a classroom teacher."

Negative Aspects

The job was considered by 77% of the superintendents to place heavy demands upon their time. Spouses, children, and recreational activities were deprived because of the long hours of work. In addition to working the regular office hours, they attended numerous night meetings. A number indicated that they had to come back to their offices on weekends or take work home to cope with the volume. Some rearranged their holiday schedules, so as not to be away from their offices in summer when heavy work commitments were upon them. Their comments illustrate how they felt about these heavy time commitments, and the effects it had on them and their families. One stated, "I had to deprive my kids of endless moments that they could have had with me because of the endless hours required by the job." Another stated, "It takes a lot out of my family." "The time commitment is horrendous," stated another. Another was more positive, "while its impacted some on our family life in terms of hours and commitments of work, in other ways it strengthened relationships so that when we had time together it was quality time."

Table 9.5

Methods Used by Superintendents to Reflect These Values in Their School Systems

Methods	f	Total
Honesty and integrity		
Being an example; modelling.	8	
Talking about them.	3	
Encouraging others to talk about them.	2	
Addressing them in policy.	1	
Insisting on absolute honesty in all relationships.	1	
Insisting that teachers teach from an unbiased viewpoint.	1	16
Education/children		
Talking publicly about children.	3	
Valuing every child as an individual.	3	
Encouraging students to stay in school.	1	7
People's contributions/strengths		
Giving personnel adequate scope to make decisions.	4	
Recognizing and acknowledging the contributions of personnel.	5	9
Hard work		
Working hard oneself.	3	
Appreciating and recognizing hard work of others.	2	
Expecting hard work of others.	2	7
Positive attitudes		
Focusing on the positive.	2	
Looking to the future rather than back at the past.	2	
Turning challenges into opportunities.	2	
Challenging others.	1	
Taking risks, innovating, and introducing new programs.	1	
Allocating adequate financial resources.	1	9
Family		
Providing an example of caring for your family to others.	3	3

Table 9.5 (continued)

Methods Used by Superintendents to Reflect These Values in Their School Systems

Respect of others		
Respecting differences in people.	2	
Respecting people's ideas.	2	
Involving people in the decision-making process.	2	
Delegating responsibility.	2	
Implementing school-based decision making.	2	
Consulting personnel.	2	
Avoiding "top-down" directions.	1	13
Teamwork		
Creating appropriate structures for teamwork to occur.	1	
Organizing a network of principals.	1	
Recognizing personnel publicly for their accomplishments.	1	
Strengthening the team building and collaboration.	1	4
Sincerity		
Listening to employees' concerns.	2	
Providing leadership by making difficult decisions.	2	4
Fair play		
Insisting on fairness in dealing with people.	1	1
Loyalty		
[No suggestions were offered.]	0	0
Independence		
Giving people latitude and letting them do things.	1	1
Courage		
Encouraging principals to stretch their talents and abilities.	1	
Accepting and dealing with challenges.	1	2
My roots		
Staying in tune with my heritage.	1	1

Table 9.5 (continued)

Methods Used by Superintendents to Reflect These Values in Their School Systems

Best I can be		
Setting very high personal goals.	1	
Extending oneself to the limit.	1	2
Sense of humor		
Laughing at oneself occasionally.	1	1
Caring for others		
Modelling caring in one's behavior.	1	
Encouraging others to model caring in their behavior.	1	2
Total	82	82

Note. The number of methods used to reflect these values ranged from 1 to 4.

Finally, another said, "It's hard on my personal life at times, because I work pretty hard, so when I come home, I'm tired. When I'm at work on weekends, the family pays a price."

Superintendents coped with these extensive time demands and heavy workloads by having "supportive and understanding families." One emphasized that the family had to come first. Another stated "the family is first, the family is more important than the job, it has taken me away from the family a lot, but they know they're more important." Yet another stated "the job takes priority over my personal life, I don't like it, but I have to admit it." Finally, "Being in a position is my personal life," said one respondent. Others used dictaphones while driving to attend to the extensive correspondence so as not to waste time.

In 46% of the cases superintendents associated their jobs with high stress. Some of the stress was caused by attempting to strike a reasonable balance between work commitments and personal life, while in other cases the job itself was simply stressful. Stress was offset somewhat by "good exercise, good diet, lots of rest, and solving problems successfully" reported a respondent. Only one superintendent did not buy the "whole stress argument."

The superintendency "gave one a false sense of security especially in a small community," according to one respondent. It was a high-profile job as far as the general public was concerned, both in terms of money and prestige but,"After you retire, you're just average Joe Citizen; there's going to be a let down, so that will affect your personal life," he noted.

A superintendent who worked in a smaller community found it frustrating when he attended social functions and people could not separate him "the person" from him "the superintendent." It was especially bothersome when individuals wanted to talk business at social functions. He had gone there to relax and enjoy the activities, and not to attend to educational problems.

In summary, one superintendent seemed to capture the feelings of many concerning the effects of the superintendency upon personal life when he likened it to the farmer. He stated, "The philosophy of the farmer is you work by the job, you don't work by the hour, if the job is there to be done, you do it, no matter how long it takes." The other analogy to farming was there was always more things to do than could be done. There was always a backlog. One stated, "The key to the whole thing is selecting priorities, select what you are going to do first from the pile, and then learn to become comfortable with the fact the pile is there. After all," he quipped, "what would you do without it?"

Balance Between the Need for Change and Employment Security

Educational organizations had to develop and grow in order to keep up with a rapidly advancing society. At the same time there were certain constraining forces opposing these changing trends. The leadership of educational organizations had to somehow balance these two forces, and still retain employment. This discussion focuses on that conflicting scenario.

The above-noted concern was raised at the AERA conference in the spring of 1990. It was formulated into a question for the interview instrument and stated as follows:

> Some observers have suggested that superintendents should be willing to make more innovative decisions in order to improve schooling. However, such actions can carry the risk of superintendents losing their jobs if the decisions have negative consequences. How can the need for educational change be balanced with the need for the superintendent's security?

Many superintendents took a defensive stance when this question was asked. The following comments illustrate their irritation: "don't buy into the question; disagree with the premise; be a risk taker, if not, you shouldn't be in this job; non-issue; and I agree with the statement but I don't subscribe to it." One observed that, "The question implies that the superintendent is going to say this is what needs to be done and it's going to happen." According to this superintendent, "Real change occurred when people took ownership of it." He added "if people take ownership then there won't be any controversy; if they don't take ownership it's not going to happen and it shouldn't."

Risk taking was part of the job according to three superintendents, and if one felt uncomfortable with this insecurity, then they should seek other jobs which provided more security.

Three superintendents felt that the need for employment security because they insisted that the system change was a non-issue . These respondents clearly placed the responsibility for change on the shoulders of boards. As chief executive officers they merely recommended educational changes, and the boards as corporations had to buy into these recommendations; if not, then change did not occur. A respondent expressed it as follows:

> in Alberta the school board is the authority, and has been given that power by the Provincial Government, and if directions are going to change, then it must be done with the agreement and support of the school board, because the school board is the policy making body, and if there is a change that I think needs to happen, then I've got to convince the board that that's a policy direction we should take.

This superintendent acknowledged that "this may sound like a cop out." He postulated though, "this is the way public education is governed, as imperfect as that may be." Another respondent stated:

> I can't imagine why somebody wouldn't make a decision, what's holding them back, how can you lose your job, if your job is to present recommendations to the board on policy, and you have these policies well thought out and well developed. To me it isn't a reason, I don't think that the need for change has to be balanced with employment security because I don't see any insecurity.

Three superintendents noted that they could make some mistakes and their jobs not be terminated; however, they felt that boards would not tolerate their making the same mistake very often.

In summary, superintendents were somewhat uncomfortable with the question and, generally, did not subscribe to the view that there was a close correlation between employment security and the vigor with which they promoted educational change. As a matter of fact, some felt protected because they were able to implement change. This was viewed as an important part of their jobs. A few took the position that real change had to be endorsed by the board. Their duty ended after the recommendation was made. The board was expected to take ownership of any changes, therefore it, and not the superintendent had to bear the consequences.

Maintaining the Balance

Their own termination was a concern of 77% of the superintendents. Their methods of maintaining that sometimes delicate balance between losing their jobs and implementing desirable educational changes are discussed below.

One believed that the balance could be maintained "by providing sounder and better education for superintendents." He advocated that, "A well-rounded educator understood teaching, learning, administration, and the change process." They also felt confident in what they were doing and were able to communicate it to their different constituencies.

Superintendents were confronted with many problems and issues, but were not expected to address them all. They had some control over their agendas. One respondent recommended that "superintendents pick their agendas, and not be on too many fronts at the same time." Also not every fight is worth fighting, nor every battle worth winning. The war can be won by losing some battles.

Only one superintendent felt that this feeling of job insecurity could have been overcome if superintendents had remained employees of the provincial government.

Superintendents in 77% of the systems felt they needed to create a climate of change in their school systems and that change should be viewed incrementally. They had to realize that real change did not take place quickly. First, they had to develop credibility with trustees, principals, and teachers. This meant being totally honest with these groups. Second, it required working with staff in small groups, offering them encouragement, allocating funds if needed, and giving the idea or innovation time to develop. One superintendent stated, "When you get people doing this they become a bit of a light house and eventually it's system wide." Third, following this process, people needed feedback to assure them that their efforts were exerted in proper directions and were appreciated. It was recommended that staff resistance to change, especially that of teachers be very carefully considered, because as one respondent said, "If teachers are unhappy, dissatisfied, and frustrated with change it will ultimately show itself at the board table." Finally, one superintendent offered the following comment which summarizes much of what has been said:

> when I make a move, I ensure I have enough people with me, especially the board, I think a person has to work at it, make sure the base is there and make sure there's enough good-will from the whole corporate body of the school system to move with it, and if you don't have that will, back off until you have it, because you're going to lose anyway.

Protection From the Consequences of Termination

Superintendents discussed the prevention, the consequences, and protection from the consequences of termination. Termination, some suggested, could be avoided by displaying impeccable professional conduct, by behaving appropriately, by listening to the advice of those who were trying to help, by being aware of the aspirations of each trustee and the corporate will of the board, by maintaining open communication so as a sense of what is happening can be gauged, by doing your job well, and by having regular evaluations. The consequences of termination were mental anguish, loss of educational stature, loss of employment opportunities, loss of salary, emotional devastation, tarnished reputation, and loss of self esteem.

The negative consequences of termination should be addressed at the time of hiring by negotiating appropriate clauses in contracts according to 11 of the superintendents. Not being protected by Collective Agreements and Boards of Reference, and not wanting to bear the expense of court charges, superintendents felt that their best employment protection was via their contracts. The range of "pay-out times" of their contracts varied from a minimum of three months to a maximum of two years. A few superintendents had clauses in their contracts saying boards could not terminate "without cause" while most stated that if the board was not satisfied with their performance they could be "let go" and simply bought out of the contract. To compensate for the expense of terminating contracts, boards had liability insurance policies in place. These policies enabled them to terminate superintendents' contracts at no great financial loss to the board. One succinctly expressed this notion as follows, "Have a golden handshake, build it into your contract, negotiate, get your salary, and get out." Another noted that superintendents were paid extra, part of that extra, he felt should be "put aside as risk pay."

Financial loss was one of the negative consequences which resulted from terminations. To offset the financial loses, one respondent suggested that, "Superintendents needed to be able to do more than just superintending." There should be other alternatives, and superintendents' associations should take an active role in preparing superintendents for these alternatives. It was felt that trustees were sometimes oblivious to the devastating consequences of terminations. One however stated, "My trustees agreed, in the event of termination, to provide me the option of selecting an administrative or teaching position somewhere in the system." Another recommended the forming of support groups to help members cope with the mental anguish. One facetiously advocated going back to being hired by the Department of Education.

Negative consequences of termination was a concern, but other than loss of salary, superintendents didn't seem to have any common solutions to address them. As one suggested, "There appears to be a need to put a process in place which discourages boards from terminating superintendents' contracts without due consideration." Another stated, "Superintendents need a period of time to find another job before being terminated, because it is much easier to get a job when you have one than when you don't." This same superintendent went on to say, "We're talking to trustees about how to handle these situations. We're not disputing their right to make the decision, but we want to help them to make it properly."

In summary superintendents presented ideas on how to prevent terminations, clearly understood the consequences of them, but were somewhat hazy on protective techniques other than for salary losses.

Changes in Method of Operation After Being Designated as Chief Executive Officers

In the *1988 School Act*, the province of Alberta officially designated superintendents as chief executive officers. All 13 superintendents stated that their method of operation did not change as a result of the changes to the Act. One stated, "The Act only put in legislation what had already existed in practice." Incidentally, the last major change that affected the superintendency was in the early 1970s when the province established regional offices and transferred the responsibility for hiring superintendents to local boards.

Concluding Remarks

Only seven of the superintendents made any concluding remarks, after it was reiterated at the end of the interview that this study focused on superintendent effectiveness. They felt that the questions were broad enough in scope and comprehensive enough to afford them the opportunity to express their views on a variety of topics. The concluding remarks of the seven respondents are presented below. They are not coded under any headings because of their diversity.

Change Process

"Educational organizations did not change automatically," according to one respondent. To experience change, required a continuous assessment of past and present practices. It meant asking the question, "Do we have the right kind of personnel to get the job done?" Teachers could no longer hide under the guise of students not being able to adjust to the situation. His response to personnel was, "You don't fit, you adjust; students always fit, the organization has to adjust." He mentioned these other aspects: (a) long-term and short-term planning was essential to bringing about desired changes, (b) for any change to occur, due consideration must be given to people, and proposed changes had to be thoroughly discussed with them, (c) change did not happen solely in the superintendents office, and (d) others had to become involved and support the change, due consideration had to be given to their contributions; allow them to experiment and encourage them to participate fully in the change process.

Change occurs after careful planning, and after involving and trusting others. Real change does not come from pronouncements or by superficial interactions.

Conflict and Ambiguity

Conflict and ambiguity existed in the superintendency. Goals were unclear and permitted different interpretations. Disagreements over interpretations led to conflicts. According to one superintendent, "A big part of the job is dealing with conflict." He was often in the midst of conflicting expectations. Time had to be spent on addressing conflicts and building agreements. This superintendent reduced conflict by clarifying goals and developing policies. After reducing ambiguity he was able to delegate, if delegation occurred before goals were clarified, unpredicted and undesired outcomes often resulted. Delegating freed up time to focus on broader issues, thereby removing himself from the day to day running of the organization. According to this respondent, "Healthy organizations have loose/tight properties." Clear and well defined goals afforded the opportunity to exercise tight control. Looseness occurred when the responsibility to accomplish these goals were delegated to employees. Much conflict could be avoided by involving employees in the decision making process.

Importance of People

The greatest strength of any superintendent resided in the people with whom he worked, according to one respondent. He was expected to recruit and hire quality staff in a competitive environment. This was especially a challenge to him because he worked in a rural area. He observed that many of the more competent teachers seemed to want to teach in larger urban areas. He stated, "Without competent people this place would be a disaster."

Pay Attention to the Public

The public has many and varied ways of sending its messages to the school system. Successful superintendents listen to these messages and demonstrate in their actions that they are sensitive to public concerns and wishes. The wishes of the public cannot be ignored.

Continual Improvement

Educational organizations are fluid and continually changing. This change should result in improvements, i.e., improved programs, improved experiences for students, and improved quality of teaching. A superintendent stated, "To be satisfied with the status quo is like treading water on a river, you're really going down stream when you need to be going up." Plans had to be in place to make things better.

Organizational Structure

Effective superintendents according to one respondent should hire a very capable instructional leader as one of his assistants. This instructional leader was to be responsible to the superintendent for the district's curriculum and instructional programs. He strongly advocated however, that the superintendents should be directly involved in financial and legal matters, and also they should retain a role in the evaluation of personnel. Superintendents must be astute politicians and organize the resources in ways that are best for the system. He stated that, "Doing the best for the system often meant doing the best for you." Superintendents were to be constantly gaining new knowledge, being innovative, keeping their systems at the cutting edge, keeping the system exciting, and keeping it a pleasant place for others to work. He issued a warning against too much paper work. "Strategic plans, and policy handbooks look good in print, but people rarely see them unless they get in trouble," he stated.

Values and Vision

Superintendents as educational leaders needed to articulate a vision based upon agreed values. The system must then be encouraged to take ownership of that vision.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings related to bases of influence, personal values, how these values are reflected in school systems, effect of the superintendency upon personal life, protection from the consequences of termination, operational changes because of being designated as chief executive officers, and any other relevant matters.

Superintendents influenced board members and other educators by skillfully utilizing a variety of bases. They used virtually the same bases to influence both groups. Board members and other educators were heavily influenced by relying upon knowledge/information, trust, experience, openness, and honesty. In addition to the above bases of influence, superintendents influenced other educators by showing them that they valued their opinions, by simply asking them to perform tasks, by demonstrating desirable performance, by giving time to deliberate over information and not appear to be impatient, by being credible, by providing needed resources, and by being supportive.

Superintendents presented 18 personal values, after which, they discussed how they reflected these values in their school systems. Integrity and honesty were the most important personal values. These values were reflected in the school systems by modelling, discussing them, encouraging others to discuss them, reflecting them in policy, and insisting upon honesty in all relationships.

Superintendents presented other personal values and suggested a variety of ways of reflecting them in their school systems as shown in Tables 9.4 and 9.5.

The superintendency affected personal lives both positively and negatively. Positive effects came in the form of providing ample opportunities for professional development, for travel, flexibility in scheduling, increased financial rewards, improved home relationships, recognition, influencing others, and developing a sense of accomplishment. Negative effects were increased time commitments, high stress, false sense of security, and the lack of a clear separation between the person and the position.

According to the superintendents, the best way to be protected from the consequences of termination was to build protective clauses in contracts. Terminations obviously had negative implications for both the personal and professional lives of superintendents. Other than loss of salary, there was very little protection from the consequences of termination.

Superintendents were designated as chief executive officers in the 1988 School Act. There were no changes in their modes of operation because of changes in the Act.

At the end of the interview, superintendents were asked to "comment upon any other relevant matters." Only seven offered concluding remarks. The other six had nothing further to add.

Chapter 10

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings, a discussion of their relationships to other research, and implications of the findings for practice and future research.

Overview of the Study

Schools have been almost the exclusive focus of educational improvement efforts for the past decade or so. However, several theorists and researchers have identified the need to use the school system as the unit of analysis. As Roberts (1991) stated, "School site reform occurs most readily in a district in which there is organizational and contextual support for such reform" (p. 2).

Consequently, the purpose of the study was to examine how the most effective superintendents in Alberta administered their school systems. Thirteen such superintendents were identified by 14 experts from the senior staff of Alberta Education, The Alberta School Trustees' Association, and The Alberta Teachers' Association. Extensive semi-structured interviews were then carried out with each superintendent. These interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using repeated listening to tapes and numerous readings of transcripts. Comments of each respondent were noted, counted, grouped, and regrouped, as recommended by Allison (1989). Follow-up interviews of shorter duration were also conducted to ascertain superintendents' reactions to some of the major findings and to invite their comments on other matters. In addition, pertinent documents were examined in order to gain a greater understanding of the context and the procedures for each system.

Findings

Superintendents were asked to identify the three highest priorities in their role. Responses were classified under the main headings of system priorities, personnel priorities, and instructional priorities.

Planning and activities associated with planning, such as developing a mission statement, identifying needs, and setting goals were by far the most frequently mentioned system priorities. Commonly mentioned priorities under personnel were communicating effectively, and maintaining good relationships, while providing appropriate programs for all students was the one commonly mentioned under instructional priorities . During the follow-up interviews, two superintendents were surprised that planning was not a priority of all respondents.

Methods of achieving these priorities varied considerably. This diversity reflected the uniqueness of each school system. Superintendents were aware of this uniqueness and considered it in achieving their priorities.

In espousing program priorities, superintendents emphasized the need to implement the programs prescribed by Alberta Education properly. However, during the follow-up interviews, some superintendents questioned whether or not there was a need for such a strong central control over programs. The close relationship between the problems of special needs students and students with severe social problems was noted during the follow-up interviews. Also, superintendents cautioned against the over-emphasis on special needs students at the expense of the majority.

Because the effectiveness of superintendents is closely intertwined with system effectiveness, the 13 superintendents were asked to identify the criteria (benchmarks, indicators) used by them to judge the overall effectiveness of their school systems. All 13 superintendents identified the level of student performance on both provincial achievement tests and Grade 12 diploma exams as important indicators of overall system effectiveness.

Nature of student responses on satisfaction surveys were very frequently mentioned, whereas level of student performance on teacher-made tests and the Canadian Test of Basic Skills were each commonly mentioned. The degree to which students are happy, the number of students receiving scholarships, the degree to which students' needs are being met, and the amount of student involvement in community activities were occasionally mentioned. Staff satisfaction as assessed through surveys was very frequently mentioned, whereas public satisfaction as informally assessed was mentioned by nearly all respondents as important indicators of system effectiveness. The type of issues discussed in the media and intensity of complaints from parents were each only occasionally mentioned.

During the first round of interviews superintendents, in judging their own effectiveness, placed considerable weight on the opinions of board members and feedback from all relevant constituent groups, and less weight upon the actual criteria that people used in making their judgments. Consequently, during the follow-up interviews, superintendents were asked to provide examples of more specific criteria. Most indicated that the actual criteria used by the system in evaluating their performance were presented in their evaluation documents. A review of these documents revealed diversity in the criteria used, but upon close examination some common threads were revealed. Superintendents were usually assessed on these aspects: (a) personal characteristics such as ethics, sincerity, flexibility, approachability, fairness, personal knowledge, practicality, creativity, and commitment; (b) skills such as leadership, relationships, problem solving, delegation, communication, conflict resolution, planning, and political acumen; and (c) a variety of tasks or functions, e.g., hiring effective personnel and meeting staff regularly. Boards often considered feedback from constituent groups in evaluating the superintendent's performance. Some boards used checklists as guides to assess the performance of their superintendents, while others assessed the performance of their superintendents in accordance with how effectively they could implement established priorities. A number of respondents expressed a reluctance on the part of trustees to become involved in the evaluation of their chief executive officers.

Constraints upon superintendent effectiveness frequently cited were political tensions with trustees, lack of time to complete heavy agendas, and inadequate financial support. Less frequently mentioned were constraints associated with an oversized agenda and those related to an overbearing bureaucracy. Superintendents did not mention any personal deficiency as a constraint. The methods used to reduce constraints depended very much upon local circumstances, and probably upon the preferences of the individual superintendent.

After having the most effective superintendents identified, obtaining their perceptions as to how they behaved to demonstrate educational leadership seemed to be particularly pertinent. All superintendents indicated that being action-oriented and being an effective delegator were ways in which they demonstrated educational leadership. Most thought it was important to set an example by displaying impeccable behavior and to involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process. Superintendents also thought it was important to be supportive, trustworthy, perceptive, visionary, enthusiastic, available, and humble. Similar responses were given when superintendents were asked, "What type of behaviors they displayed which might be considered superior to their less effective colleagues."

A common personal factor frequently mentioned which contributed to superintendent effectiveness was having skills in dealing with people, whereas having a sense of direction, and having a sound knowledge base were commonly mentioned. Being politically astute was mentioned occasionally. Situational factors were less frequently identified, but having an action-oriented board was occasionally mentioned in this category. Superintendents clearly felt that they, not the situation, affected and controlled their effectiveness. Many of the personal factors mentioned were in the realm of "people skills."

All school systems had staff evaluation policies in place to evaluate the different groups of staff. Superintendents evaluated assistant superintendents, assistant superintendents evaluated consultants, and secretary-treasurers evaluated the business staff. Methods frequently mentioned were performance measured against predetermined goals and feedback from other stakeholders, whereas holding frequent discussions and updates were commonly mentioned.

Superintendents were personally, very frequently involved in the evaluation of principals. Some principals were evaluated annually while others were evaluated every three to five years. Performance of principals was frequently measured against predetermined goals. Solicitation of feedback from teachers as the means of evaluation was commonly mentioned. Methods of evaluation given occasional mention were as follows: performance measured against board established criteria; as part of school evaluations; through the use of informal assessments; utilizing the services of assistant superintendents; and by questionnaires administered to students.

Superintendents were usually not involved in the evaluation of teachers, unless teachers were experiencing severe problems. Principals were the primary evaluators of teachers. Tenured teachers were ordinarily evaluated in three to five year cycles. The teachers' association was reported to be involved with difficult cases, in only one instance.

Superintendents frequently used knowledge/information as a base of influence when dealing with board members. Trust, experience/track record, and openness and honesty received frequent mentions. Effective communication and respect as an educational leader were only mentioned occasionally. Seven others including good sense, being positive, being logical, appealing to agreed-upon values, having the confidence of others, and relating decisions to students were mentioned once. Superintendents used essentially the same bases of influence when dealing with other educators as when dealing with board members.

The superintendency had both positive and negative effects upon the personal lives of incumbents. Positively, it provided opportunities for professional development, gave flexibility, and increased financial rewards. A limited number felt their jobs improved relationships at home, provided power, excitement, recognition, influence, and a sense of accomplishment. One thought it even helped him to become more tolerant and humble. Negatively, long time demands were very frequently mentioned. The high stress level associated with the job was commonly mentioned. Negative effects that received one mention each were the creation of a false sense of security, and the difficulty of others to separate the person from the job.

Values frequently mentioned by superintendents were integrity and honesty. Valuing people's contributions/strengths, education, hard work, and positive attitudes were commonly mentioned, while gaining the respect of others, teamwork, and sincerity received occasional mention. Eight others including fair play, loyalty, independence, courage, roots(heritage), best I can be, sense of humor, and caring for others were mentioned only once. Each respondent presented a variety of means of reflecting these values in their school system. For instance, superintendents reflected honesty and integrity by the examples they set for others. Other methods of reflecting these two values were by addressing them in policy, insisting on absolute honesty in all relationships, and insisting that teachers teach from an unbiased viewpoint.

Other researchers, e.g., Duignan (1979), Pitner and Ogawa (1981), have noted the high percentage of a superintendent's time spent interacting with others, but did not examine the nature of these interactions. This particular research explored the nature of these interactions with board chairmen, other board members, secretary-treasurers, assistant superintendents, principals, teachers, students, the community, Alberta Education, The Conference of Alberta School Superintendents, The Alberta School Trustees' Association, The Alberta Teachers' Association, their support staff, and others.

Superintendents were available and interacted with whomever had an interest in education. They spoke positively about their interactions and valued the opinions and suggestions of all stakeholders.

Superintendents were generally positive about the heavy emphasis placed upon theory in graduate schools. Because each superintendency was unique, the practical aspects were best left to be learned after occupying the job. In-service sessions dealing with current issues were beneficial. In addition to their involvement with formal agendas at conferences, superintendents appreciated time to interact with colleagues in informal relaxed atmospheres.

Information packages and recommendations were presented to trustees prior to board meetings. Approximately one-half of the superintendents actively participated in the debates, while others took a more reticent posture and let the meeting be a meeting of trustees. Chairmen and superintendents almost always met prior to board meetings to set the agenda. However, all 13 superintendents exerted considerable control over agenda items.

Summary

The major findings as presented are summarized below:

1. The priority most frequently mentioned by superintendents was planning.

2. The use of many different methods to achieve superintendents' priorities reflected the uniqueness of each school system.

3. Highly evident was the interrelatedness of the priorities; many were considered to be sub-priorities of others.

4. Superintendents' highest educational priorities were to implement provincial programs properly, provide programs for special needs students, and to develop programs to help alleviate social problems.

5. The effectiveness of their school systems was mainly judged by student performance on standardized tests and diploma exams and by staff, student, and public satisfaction.

6. The effectiveness of superintendents was mainly judged by annual formal board evaluations in accordance with criteria outlined in documents and/or measured against the accomplishment of goals. Formal and informal feedback from constituent groups were the major data sources.

7. The major constraints upon superintendents' effectiveness were related to system politics, time, finances, and an oversized agenda.

8. A diversity of methods was used to reduce the effect of these constraints.

9. These superintendents were action-oriented and effectively delegated responsibilities in demonstrating educational leadership.

10. These superintendents proposed that their support for staff and their humility made them appear to be more effective than many of their colleagues.

11. Possessing skills in dealing with people, having a sense of direction, and possessing a sound knowledge base were the most frequently mentioned factors that contributed to superintendents' effectiveness.

12. Central office personnel were generally evaluated by those to whom they reported.

13. Superintendents were heavily involved in the evaluation of principals.

14. Teachers on probation and those experiencing difficulties were frequently evaluated by superintendents.

15. The most important bases of superintendents' influence were a sound knowledge base, trustworthiness, a good track record, and openness and honesty.

16. The personal lives of superintendents were affected positively by increased opportunities for professional development, and travel. Family life was affected negatively because of heavy time demands and high stress levels.

17. The most important personal values of superintendents were integrity and honesty.

18. Superintendents, on average, spent seven hours per week in schools.

19. Superintendents had meaningful, ongoing, and positive interactions with many constituents.

20. Considerable control over school board agendas was exerted by superintendents.

21. Superintendents were positive about the emphasis placed upon theory in their graduate training, but a few desired more practical applications of this theory.

22. It was imperative for superintendents to keep up-to-date on developments in education. Unscheduled interaction at conferences with colleagues aided them in keeping-up-to-date.

During the follow-up interviews, a majority of the superintendents expressed pleasure with being involved in the study and felt it was a timely topic. Some of their reactions and comments about the general topic of school superintendent effectiveness follow: if good people were selected, everything else fell into place; it was "key" to be able to communicate a vision; more and more time was required to attend to system politics; success in implementing unpopular decisions depended, to a great extent, on the implementors; and argument and debate during the decision making process is essential, but don't waste time on issues already settled. Most superintendents stated they had had the opportunity to express their opinions on the topic of superintendent effectiveness by responding to the range of questions proposed during the initial interview.

Discussion

The superintendent's role continues to be ambiguous, demanding, influential, interesting, and pivotal.

General Themes

Three general underlying themes relevant to the effectiveness of superintendents emerged from this study. Effective superintendents developed clear visions for themselves and for their school systems, they clearly understood the importance of people to educational organizations, and they felt it necessary to be visible. In addition, a number of sub-themes arose which were important to superintendent effectiveness.

Developing visions. The effective superintendents in this study had a clear vision for their systems which they were able to translate into mission statements, goals, and objectives, all with a student focus. Superintendents readily identified priorities for the facilitation and achievement of this vision. They were very involved in many operational aspects. They accumulated large amounts of information relative to their school systems, but they were able to organize the information into patterns or frameworks of easily understood configurations relevant to the vision.

While no individual member of the educational system can be expected to resolve all of the problems facing public education, the superintendent, as the official head of the local school system, is expected to provide the leadership necessary to address many of them (Bjork, 1990). Aplin and Daresh (1984) and others have suggested that, in order to improve student outcomes, superintendents must adjust their roles as business managers and develop stronger instructional leadership skills in the areas of curriculum and instruction, if they wish to become effective. Researchers advocating this instructional role for superintendents seem to be assuming that all students are housed in comfortable buildings and supplied with appropriate instructional materials and equipment, that harmonious relationships among the many constituents exist, and the many different roles are clearly defined and understood. It may be that superintendents have to become involved in whichever activities are important to their individual systems before they are considered effective. For example, if a new school building is needed the superintendent should be involved in its acquisition and planning; he should be equally involved in providing a new program if that is identified as a need.

Effective school superintendents have been identified by panels of experts (e.g., Aplin & Daresh, 1984; and Hoyle 1988), and by relying on statistical data from student scores on standardized tests (e.g., Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; Pajak & Glickman, 1989; and Jackson & Crawford, 1991). Although a few researchers such as Jacobson (1986, 1988) and Jackson and Crawford (1991) have compared the differences in the behavior patterns of superintendents of improving and non-improving districts, most have included only effective superintendents in their studies. This study examined only superintendents identified as effective.

These effective superintendents were first asked to state their three highest priorities and how they achieved these in their respective school systems. Although superintendents presented a great variety of priorities, planning and issues related to planning emerged as by far the highest. According to Dror (1963), planning is "the process of preparing a set of decisions for action in the future directed at achieving goals" (p. 46). Achoff (1970) defined planning as "the design of a desired future and of effective ways of bringing it about" (p. 1). More recently, Bolman and Deal (1988) stated that:

> Planning is an administrative process that has become increasingly prominent as a sign of good management. An organization that does not plan is thought to be reactive, short-sighted, and rudderless. Planning has become a ceremony that an organization must conduct periodically to maintain its legitimacy. A plan is a badge of honor that organizations wear conspicuously and with considerable pride. (p. 177)

Superintendents facilitated the development of strategic and short-term plans. More emphasis was reported to be placed on the development of plans in larger systems. These larger systems had planning teams and these superintendents were far enough removed from everyday activities to devote time to project into the future. Superintendents in smaller school systems did not have these luxuries. Plans were developed by applying two distinct processes: (a) "top down," i. e., the basic plan was formulated by the decision-making authority and then presented to others for reaction and modification, or (b) "bottom up," i. e., the plan emerged from the lower levels of the organization and eventually became formally sanctioned by the board of trustees. A crucial component of whichever process was applied was the involvement of many constituent groups. Most superintendents considered the implementation of the plan an easier assignment if there were extensive involvement in its formulation. System mission statements, focusing on students, were usually developed prior to the district plan or were an integral part of it.

Superintendents believed they were primarily responsible for providing leadership in the development of system priorities and in coordinating the development of system plans. This was often expressed as creating and articulating a vision for the system. Messages from superintendents set the tone for the systems, perhaps more than many incumbents realized. Superintendents, in order to be effective, need a vision or a strategic plan for their respective school systems. They must also possess the skills to entice others to buy into and become a part of that vision.

Importance of people. Because educational organizations are "people organizations," concern for and about people emerged as a dominant theme. This did not mean that superintendents were always "nice" to people; it meant being honest, open, and up-front even at the risk of sometimes being offensive. Superintendents believed that people wanted to be involved and participate in decision-making. They further believed that this involvement would lead to their taking ownership of the enterprise. The superintendents in this study developed and cultivated this feeling of ownership by promoting involvement, teamwork, and valuing the worth and dignity of every individual who had an interest in the organization. To help superintendents with this role, some advocated that universities should provide training and background knowledge in the "softer dimensions" of leadership.

Superintendent priorities were not achieved in isolation; the active involvement and commitment of many constituent groups was required. In the "big picture," individuals and groups external to the organization seemed to play a significant role. The input and involvement of parents, business organizations, community service organizations, and churches were actively sought. These groups were often significant players in the formulation of system visions.

Many of the 13 superintendents were concerned about the negative effects of ineffective teachers and principals. Ineffective staff were often supported financially to participate in upgrading. Some were transferred to other schools, others were encouraged to submit early resignations, while in a few cases, boards financed premature separation of staff. There was considerable reluctance in utilizing the grievance and board of reference process. Respondents in this study tended to consider this process impractical and unwieldy in settling alleged incompetency cases. The involvement of The Alberta Teachers' Association was sometimes solicited to amicably settle serious staff problems. Jackson and Crawford (1991) stated there was no evidence in their study to suggest that the action of dismissing ineffective teachers was more common in improving districts than in non-improving districts. Superintendents in this study clearly considered it their responsibility to become involved with difficult personnel problems, for, as one stated, "You do not ask others to do things you would not do yourself." An important measure of superintendent effectiveness may be the appropriateness with which they overcome serious personnel problems.

Superintendents in this study developed collegial relationships with individuals and constituent groups both inside and outside of the organization. Little time was spent discussing special interest groups or protest groups during the interviews; however, this should not be taken to mean that such groups did not exist. When these groups emerged, their concerns were acknowledged and listened to, but their requests were not necessarily granted. Boards of trustees did not seem to be swayed to extremes in their policies by these groups; the voice of the silent majority appeared to be prevalent.

Superintendents still had to deal with the political environment as suggested by early writers, but the political tensions currently existed mostly at the system level, especially between the board and the superintendent. They exerted considerable effort to minimize tensions between themselves and the various constituent groups and, also, among the constituent groups. Staff were perceived to operate most effectively in an atmosphere of mutual trust where open dialogue occurred. The absence of this trust leads to suspicions, back-stabbing, conniving, misrepresenting, and deceitfulness which will eventually undermine the effectiveness of the superintendent as well as the system. To offset this superintendents commonly expressed a desire to interact frequently and effectively. The lines of communication to and from the office of the superintendent must be kept open at all times. Superintendents did not view the authority of their positions as a means of settling these disputes. Instead they exerted influence by consultation, consideration, and even by manipulation, but rarely by being autocratic.

In their quest for a cooperative relationship with their boards, superintendents struggled to clearly demarcate the two different areas of policy and administration. Confusion leading to frustration often developed because of ambiguous role descriptions. They desired to know where they stood with respect to these issues. Furthermore, the superintendent's relationship with the local community was relatively calm rather than overtly political in their day-to-day interactions; this was similar to relationships found by Crowson and Morris (1990).

Researchers have portrayed effective superintendents as being highly involved in curriculum and instruction and as having control over curriculum. (See, for example, Aplin & Daresh, 1984, Hallinger & Murphy, 1982; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986; and Peterson et al., 1987.) Jackson and Crawford (1991) observed that this centralized control frequently involved the alignment of curriculum objectives with standardized test content. Some researchers such as Murphy and Hallinger (1986) reported the adoption of even centralized instructional modes. The above-reported research was all conducted in the United States. The curricula in Canada are highly centralized with major decisions residing with the ministry, thereby automatically removing most of these curriculum decisions from the local level. A majority of the respondents in this study considered it a priority to implement the prescribed provincial curricula properly. They did not, however, have the same curriculum concerns as their colleagues in the United States. Jackson and Crawford (1991) reported the existence of a standardized, written curriculum in both improving and non-improving districts in the United States, but expressed skepticism concerning teacher use of the curriculum guides. In their study, only one superintendent was perceived to be highly involved in curriculum and instruction; however, superintendents had a profound interest in their quality and quantity.

Being visible. Superintendents in this study also had a profound interest in curriculum and instructional matters. This interest led them to spend considerable time in schools interacting with principals, teachers, and students on everyday activities. To perform their tasks properly superintendents expressed a need to visit and be visible at school sites.

Researchers have recognized the need to establish strong support systems for principals. (See, for example Sapone, 1988; Aplin & Daresh, 1984; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986; and Roberts, 1991.) Superintendents in this study spent on average seven hours per week in schools. During these visits they nearly always met principals and discussed a variety of issues. In addition, they visited classrooms and interacted with teachers and students. Similar findings were reported by Murphy, Hallinger, and Peterson (1985); especially consistent with this study were the oral and visual nature of the supervisory process. Superintendents felt it desirable to be on school sites, to perform informal monitoring, and to offer advice and support to principals on a continuing basis. As Gunn and Holdaway (1986) recommended, "principals were left to run schools as they saw fit," but received the concern, expert advice, and support of superintendents. There was every indication that principals appreciated this aspect of the superintendent's role. This finding appears to be at variance with that of Hannaway and Sproull (1978-79), Peterson (1984), and Crowson and Morris (1990) who reported an "administrative distancing" between central offices and school sites.

Sub-themes. Surprisingly, the notion of constraints upon the effectiveness of leaders has been largely neglected in the literature. Eastcott, Holdaway, and Kuiken (1974) noted that constraints originate in the personal, situational, political, financial, and value systems characteristic of the organizational environment. This study found, as had most previous researchers, a heavy emphasis upon situational constraints as opposed to personal constraints. Only upon deeper reflection in the follow-up interviews did a few respondents refer to their own personal constraints. Even researchers such as Murphy (1987) seemed to be placing more responsibility upon training institutions than upon superintendents themselves for their personal constraints. Perhaps the superintendents in this study did not wish to identify their personal constraints, since they were identified as among the "most organizationally effective superintendents" in the province and perhaps perceived themselves as having few of them. Political constraints, especially the dynamics between boards of trustees and superintendents over role clarification, were very contentious. Superintendents desired trustees to restrict themselves to policy making and to leave the administering of the system to employees. Lack of time associated with an extremely heavy agenda posed considerable concern for respondents. The shortage of finances to perform the job effectively was a constraint identified in this study and by others. (See, for example, Eastcott et al., 1974; Johnson, 1988; and Highett 1989.) In the provision of a social service such as education, where goals are unclear and the perception of what resources are necessary seems to be highly individualistic, perhaps the lack of finances will always be identified as a constraint, even if in some cases to camouflage the real constraints which exist in the personal domain.

Constraints were recognized by the respondents but not accepted as insurmountable. They proposed realistic ways and means of overcoming these barriers to success. They did not take a defeatist attitude. Perhaps the vigor with which superintendents address constraints may be one of the means by which the most effective are separated from the less effective.

Recruitment, selection, preparing, and evaluating of educational staff were prime responsibilities of superintendents. All superintendents involved in this study were actively involved in the evaluation of district personnel. Most formally evaluated assistant superintendents and secretary-treasurers and many evaluated principals. They usually only became involved in formally evaluating teachers when the teachers were experiencing difficulties. Of more importance, perhaps, were the informal assessments which occurred. It was a time when superintendents could devote limited attention to the agendas of school personnel and students, thereby demonstrating an interest in and a commitment to addressing some of their concerns and problems. Some literature reports that superintendents in effective school districts frequently revised evaluation instruments to align criteria with district goals and instructional models. (See, for example, Cuban, 1984; and Murphy et al., 1987.)

Training institutions desiring to promote the role depicted above would be well advised to provide prospective superintendents with backgrounds in the interpersonal dimensions instead of emphasizing technical knowledge. These dimensions include such matters as effective communication skills including listening, commitment to the task, being honest and open in all relationships, and being a person of integrity. Most superintendents in this study advocated training in theory, mega trends, and general concepts. Only a few were interested in the use of case studies and the routine practical dimensions of administration. Although respondents did not use the nomenclature of developing organizational culture and providing symbolic and transformational leadership, these notions pervaded the interviews. In this regard, Bjork (1990) advocated that superintendents should become involved in symbolic activities, including valuing and rewarding performances, and giving formal and informal messages which provide rôle cues for subordinates.

Engaging in symbolic activities is part of the complicated and dynamic process of dealing with various constituent groups impinging upon education. It is part of the complicated process of change in an organization for which superintendents need internal and external support.

Crowson and Morris (1990) accentuated the risk-taking nature of the superintendency, a phenomenon which they suggested was little investigated. Many of the superintendents in this study were somewhat puzzled by the question dealing with taking risks when implementing educational change. However, they generally agreed that before change is implemented, adequate support bases must be developed to reduce risks. It is desirable and perhaps necessary for the board, the public, and the staff to subscribe to change; if they do not, then real change is not likely to occur. Some respondents felt that the major risks had to be taken by boards of trustees and not by superintendents, since superintendents were involved in recommending policies on major issues and were not the decision makers. The consequences to those who recommend policies and to those who decide upon them may not be greatly different in the realm of reality.

Implications

Implications for Practice

The practical implications presented below were extracted from the data and from impressions. If the 13 superintendents in the study were among the most effective, and if their reported behaviors are typical of all of the most effective superintendents, then the following matters have relevance for all superintendents aspiring to be as effective as possible.

1. Superintendents should recognize that their roles have symbolic importance in creating priorities, values, and beliefs throughout the entire system. Messages given at formal and informal meetings regarding performance and standards valued by the superintendent give cues to subordinates and others. Bjork (1990) reported that "engaging in symbolic activities . . . is a complicated process of change through which the individual can gain internal and external support" (p. 15).

2. An important activity is to focus on students and learning and to be able to articulate the primacy of learning in system plans and in visionary ways so that other constituents would support it. The vision--the mega plan--needs to be articulated in such a compelling way, that others feel empowered to implement it.

3. The success of an educational system depends on the commitment of many individuals and groups both internal and external to the system. In order to secure this commitment, superintendents must communicate in an honest, open, and truthful manner.

4. School systems are bureaucratic, open, complex, and loosely coupled. In such a milieu, it is important to clarify roles and give order to the system. Trustees and superintendents should, as much as possible, separate policy development from administration. Policy formulation is the right and proper responsibility of boards of trustees, while policy implementation is best left to staff. Organizational theorists such as Daft (1988) and Owens (1988) have noted that organizations cannot seal themselves off

from their environment if they wish to survive. They must continually change and adapt to this environment. Partly due to the uncertainties brought on by external environmental dynamism, there often exists what Weick (1976) referred to as loose coupling. These uncertainties negate the possibility of the organization making a coordinated response which often results in hasty and ill-conceived decisions. Organizations offset some of these negative conditions by loosely coupling their component parts and by giving these parts the responsibility and authority to respond to immediate concerns.

5. Throughout much of the literature, the superintendent is portrayed as a lonely person (e. g., Armstrong, 1990). However, some authors such as Crowson and Morris (1990) have found that superintendents interacted and communicated with many individuals in a communicative and consultative manner. This latter view was supported in this study. Strong support bases were evident in board chairmen, senior staff, and provincial agencies. Many decisions rested solely with the superintendent; however, numerous consultations to ascertain all facts and different viewpoints were undertaken prior to making these decisions. This extensive consultation process usually gave superintendents more information relative to a decision than that available to other concerned parties. In addition, those most affected by a decision were often invited to become involved in the decision-making process. "People will accept a decision, even if it is contrary to their wishes, if they feel their opinions are considered in the process," according to one of the respondents in this study. Superintendents who wish to become effective are to involve other constituents in the decision-making process as much as possible.

6. In the current climate of accountability, educators and others are anxious to develop indicators of performance. Following the extensive research on teacher and principal effectiveness, the focus may now shift to the superintendent. This prior research reveals great complexity in its attempts to advance lists of effectiveness indicators. In research on district level effectiveness, it is important to retain a perspective on this

complexity and to appreciate its effects and influences. Caution is advised in adopting any single set of correlates for improvement at the system level. The uniqueness of each superintendent and of each school system must be taken into account.

7. Superintendents needed to be visible and accessible. They interacted with principals, teachers, and students. This was a challenge for superintendents even in the smaller districts, but one which they were prepared to accept. These superintendents appeared to be following the advice of Johnson (1990) who reported that "principals hoped that superintendents would know their schools and the particular problems that they faced" (p. 4).

8. Superintendents should become involved in community activities and represent the interests of the system in the community. Strategies to do this include membership in community service organizations, attendance at church functions and being visible at community events such as sports tournaments, theatrical performances, and socials.

9. Superintendents can easily become embroiled in "the ocean of trivial management and storms of conflict" (Wirt, 1990, p. 74). If superintendents desire to become effective, they must delegate many of the more trivial matters and perhaps thereby avoid some of the storms of conflict by being open and honest, by communicating effectively, and by having meaningful interactions with constituent groups. Wirt (1990) asserts that, "instructional leadership can take place . . ., but not if the superintendent is expected to fight his way through the day" (p. 75).

10. Superintendents in this study seem to empathize with the advice of Murphy (1989), i.e., a strong superintendent in future is likely to be less a "take-charge boss than an unheroic and more consultative leader." They discussed developing shared visions, empowerment, facilitating, building agreements, listening, persuading, and even manipulating--but not dictating. As a result, the professional training and upgrading experiences of superintendents should be theory-oriented, because of the situation

specificity of each school system. The detailed modes of operation must be left to incumbents who occupy these positions. The suggestion of Cymbol (1986) still holds, i.e., "Individuals who prefer well defined positions with a high degree of specialization may not be able to cope with the present role of the superintendent" (p. 231).

11. Duignan (1979) reported, "the superintendent's work is generally superficial, discontinuous, and subject to frequent interruptions" (p. 212). This may be so on a daily basis, but, over an extended period of time, effective superintendents established priorities, missions, and strategic plans and further ensure that these come to fruition. They were prepared to tolerate diversions, but, at the "end of the day," goals were to be accomplished and desirable outcomes achieved. Although they spent considerable time reacting to events, they were conscious of this and desired a more pro-active stance, which many had taken.

12. Superintendents in South Australia were expected to "focus on the personal and professional development needs of principals, provide superintendents with time to support principals within their schools, and to give meaningful feedback to principals about their performance" (Highett, 1989, p. 348). This expectation was confirmed by the respondents in this study.

13. Finally, it is prudent to note that the findings and implications were examined from the superintendent's perspective. Other important constituencies influence the effectiveness of school systems.

Implications and Recommendations for Research

Recent researchers such as Bridges (1982), Hoyle (1988), and Allison (1989) have noted the dearth of research on the superintendency. With these same researchers and others advocating more inquiry on this position, students and researchers are expected to respond. For example, recent publications edited by Leithwood and Musella (1991) and by

Musella (1991) attest to the recent interest in the topic in Canada. It appears to be timely and important to attempt to give direction to that inquiry.

We should bear in mind what Holdaway (1986) reported, i.e., that there is a common concern at the failure of research to have more than a "fragmented impact" on educational policy--a dysfunction he attributed to time constraints, decision makers' personal preference, the short time-frames of policy makers, and the surprising nature of many research findings. More important however, may be the long-term reforms emerging from what Holdaway saw as a study's capacity "to provide different conceptions, to reformulate problems, to furnish new insights, to sharpen perceptions, and to stimulate discussion and questioning" (p. 255). Therefore, as Johnson (1988) stated "immediate practical implications may be of less consequence than the impetus that a study can give to further productive inquiry" (p. 337). Even if the findings do no more than "make the obvious obvious," the study may have far-reaching implications for both the practice of educational administration and for further inquiry.

Qualitative methods of inquiry as were primarily used in this study have recently become prominent. (See, for example, Aplin and Daresh, 1984; Murphy and Hallinger, 1986; Pajak and Glickman, 1989; Crowson and Morris, 1990; Holloway, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Roberts, 1991; and Jackson and Crawford 1991.) General role studies, as useful as these studies have been, appear to have already revealed what is to be revealed by this line of inquiry. Recent studies are becoming more focused. For example, Johnson (1990) explored the superintendents' approaches to leadership and constituents' responses to these efforts; Armstrong (1990) examined superintendents' interpersonal networks; and Holloway (1990) investigated superintendent's interactions with board members outside of school board meetings.

This study has highlighted the expansiveness and complexity of the superintendency

--a position which requires much more in-depth examination of some of its aspects if the quality of this position and that of training institutions and in-service sessions are to be improved. A useful line of inquiry may be to examine one of these segments in detail. Examination of all functions of the role of the superintendent intensively is beyond the scope of one doctoral study. In that light, an in-depth examination of the superintendent's role in planning and in communicating would be a beneficial exercise. The 13 superintendents in this study agreed with the 16 school district leaders in Paulu's (1988) study (as cited in Hord et al.,1990), i. e., that planning for what they want their system to become was an important activity for superintendents. This vision provides the basis for the articulation of goals and expectations.

Superintendents interact and communicate with many constituent groups in the performance of their duties, none of whom are more important than the people who reside in schools--principals, teachers, students, and support staff. The linkage between the superintendent's behavior and events taking place in schools need to be examined more carefully. The superintendent's behavior may be linked, even if through other constituent groups, to the performance of students. Studies on superintendent effectiveness are clearly making that connection. Superintendents send both written messages (memos, policy statements, reports, and letters) and oral cues to schools. The tone, intensity, and frequency of these cues send subtle messages of expectations to school personnel. The nature of these cues provide fertile ground for researchers.

Educational organizations are "people organizations," and successful educational leaders require "people skills." This theme appears to underlie many of the comments of the respondents in this study. The need for a considerate, consultative, and communicative mode of operation was called for. Some respondents suggested the following as attributes of leaders skilled in working with people: perceptiveness, intuitiveness, communication including listening, being visionary, being competent, and having credibility. An in-depth examination of this matter is needed, focusing on the development and maintenance of these characteristics, and the effect of these on constituent groups.

An important activity in successful change and organizational improvement is the monitoring of progress. Also, staff accountability has consumed considerable time and effort during the past two decades. Superintendents in effective districts monitor schools, classrooms, and personnel, especially principals, and also curriculum and instruction (Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Some superintendents in this study reported that their school systems were monitored by outside agencies such as regional offices and educators from other school jurisdictions. Superintendents themselves were evaluated by trustees who often relied upon feedback from other constituents as data sources upon which to make their assessments. Most respondents noted a reluctance on the part of trustees to willingly become involved in this process. Inquiry is required in the criteria of effective school systems/superintendents, who should and can evaluate, by which methods, and what are acceptable standards. These packages should be communicated to boards of trustees with a view to helping them feel more "comfortable" with the evaluation process. The methods to be applied in continual formative monitoring to ensure changes are implemented would be especially beneficial. In addition to the formal evaluation process, the methods and effect upon receivers of informal evaluation procedures are of particular interest and importance.

Ultimately, the greatest contribution of researchers may be to identify relevant factors for practitioners to improve their own situations based upon the unique contextual characteristics of their systems and the outcomes deemed most important for their students. Superintendents appear to have considerable control over their own success but situational factors can either enhance or retard that progress. Efforts by superintendents are affected by current provincial/state level reform initiatives, by board member support and leadership, by the commitment and expertise of all staff, and by community support. In addition, Boich et al. (1989) presented four general social trends--information-based society, aging population, increased cultural diversity, and equal rights--which affect the superintendency. These trends are already occurring and will continue to occur in Canadian education. In addition, Boich et al. suggested that the superintendent of the future must be an "organizational designer" capable of these functions: performing ethical and symbolic leadership; doing managerial functions; empowering others; and reflecting upon the implications of his policies. More inquiry is required to ascertain effective ways of dealing with constituent groups and coping with these societal changes.

Based upon the findings about the priorities, effective superintendencies encompass many areas of responsibility; it embodies much more than "instructional leadership," a role that was popular among some effective district researchers (e.g., Murphy and Hallinger, 1986). Judgments must also include developing and sharing a system vision, having a concern for people, providing adequate resources, and adapting and adjusting the internal operations of the organizations to adjust to external expectations. Moreover, based upon the contingency theory of effective leadership, the choice of priorities seems to depend upon the time and upon the circumstances in which superintendents work.

Many factors emerged from this study which constrain superintendent effectiveness; some have already been identified (e.g., by Eastcott, Holdaway and Kuiken, 1974; Renihan and Renihan, 1984; Murphy, 1987; Johnson, 1988; and Highett, 1989.) Superintendents still operate in a political environment, their agendas are excessive and exceed reasonable time limits, and the lack of adequate financing still impedes their performance. Administrative development assistance would be an asset to help superintendents cope with these constraints.

A few researchers (e.g., Jacobson, 1986, 1988; and Jackson and Crawford, 1991) have compared superintendents' behavior in effective and ineffective school districts. For this particular study the most organizationally effective superintendents in the province of

Alberta were identified by a panel of experts from a prescribed list of eligible candidates. Another useful methodological approach in examining this topic would be to first survey the eligible candidates by interviews and/or questionnaires, and then have the most organizationally effective superintendents identified and their responses compared with others in the sample.

Finally, the small sample used in this study precluded generalizing to large populations of superintendents. Therefore, replicating the study in other provinces to determine whether the results of this study pertain elsewhere could be valuable. Ultimately, the greatest contribution of researchers may be to identify relevant factors for practitioners to improve their own situations based upon the unique contextual characteristics of their districts and the outcomes deemed most important for their students. Practitioners will no doubt extract from this study findings which they deem relevant for their own circumstances.

Concluding Remarks

The notion of effectiveness has occupied the time and interests of many researchers; the quest for means to achieve it has been appealing. In the educational setting, principal and school effectiveness have traditionally been the focal point of most of the research; however, recently superintendents and school systems have received more attention. This study examined the priorities of 13 effective superintendents, how they achieved effectiveness, the nature of their interactions with important constituent groups, bases of influence upon which they relied, their personal values, their willingness to take risks, and the amount of time they spent in schools. Although some researchers have suggested that clues to school system effectiveness remain with the individual schools; does it partially reside with the system or does it reside in a combination of both?

A close relationship between superintendent and system effectiveness is claimed by various researchers. To have an effective system without having an effective superintendent seems to be impossible. Numerous researchers have accentuated the importance of the situation in enhancing a leader's effectiveness. Perhaps though, superintendents who possess the characteristics of the 13 in this study would be effective in any school district.

The 13 superintendents in this study were very aware of their political environment, had clear understandings of their relationships with their school boards, saw the need to communicate effectively with relevant publics, and consciously made time available to visit schools.

Clearly, superintendent effectiveness is a multi-dimensional construct. Researchers have not yet proposed a set of universalistic criteria, which if attended to, will ensure their effectiveness. This may be because each operates in a unique situation and each incumbent is unique. All have their own traditions, beliefs, practices, and expectations. Educational leaders must "tune into" the uniqueness of their own systems and understand them thoroughly before maximum development can take place.

Concurrent with superintendent and system uniqueness are general social trends in which superintendents must operate. Superintendents will have to operate and school systems must grow within the context of these social trends. Boich et al. (1989) advocated an "organizational designer" as the superintendent of the future. The superintendent who is willing and capable of wearing this mantle, which has been too long unworn, will be the educational leader needed in this country in the future, according to these authors.

In spite of all that has been written, the role of the superintendent is still ambiguous, demanding, exciting, influential, interesting, and pivotal in school system operation. Onerous responsibilities will continue to be placed upon superintendents in future. To cope with these demands superintendents must have clear visions for their school systems, possess scrupulous honesty and integrity, be adept in the art of working cooperatively with constituent groups, and hold their systems accountable for the welfare, well-being, and highest possible education for students.

The main general contribution of the study was that it improved our knowledge about practices employed by some of the most effective superintendents. Its theoretical contribution probably lies in the assistance that it provides in improving our understanding of conceptual frameworks and the relationship among relevant variables.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Judges

1 August 1990

Dear :

I am writing to request your cooperation in a research project dealing with superintendents in Alberta.

The main purpose of the study that I am conducting jointly with Tony Genge, a Newfoundland superintendent who is a doctoral student in our department, is to obtain information about the ways in which the "most organizationally effective superintendents" in Alberta administer their school systems. A stratified sample of about 10-12 superintendents will be selected after knowledgeable people have made independent identifications of superintendents whom they would place in the classification of the "most organizationally effective." Information will be collected by interviewing the superintendents, analyzing relevant documents, and, where possible, attending school board meetings. Anonymity and confidentiality issues will be addressed with sensitivity; the research project has been approved by an ethics review panel of this department. Funding has been provided by our Faculty of Education's Scholarship and Research Awards Committee. In addition to items related to effectiveness, the sample of superintendents will be asked to answer questions about their role, their bases of influence, and their job satisfaction. The sample will be stratified by (a) size of school system and (b) district, or division, or county.

I would be very grateful if you would consent to serve as an assessor of the "most organizationally effective superintendents." Selection is to be made from the attached lists of qualified superintendents (full-time with one system and at least two years in the position by the fall of 1990) categorized by (a) size of system and (b) district, division, or county.

If you are willing to agree to this request, then I would prefer to meet individually with you to go over the lists of superintendents. I would appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience. I will try to arrange a meeting for early September.

Yours sincerely,

E. A. Holdaway
Professor

EAH/tk

APPENDIX B

Letter to Superintendents

«data Sup names»
«set date = ?What is the date?»
Private and Confidential

«Fullname»
«IF Position=""»«ELSE»«Position»
«ENDIF»«IF Department=""»«ELSE»«Department»
«ENDIF»«address»
«city», «province»
«postal code»

Dear «name»:

I am writing to request your cooperation and participation in a research project. The major purpose of this project is to obtain information and opinions about how the most organizationally effective superintendents work in their school systems, and then to prepare generalizations and recommendations.

You have been identified by a panel of informed educators as being in this category of the most organizational effective superintendents in Alberta. If you agree to participate in the project, your involvement would consist of being interviewed for an hour or so, with the possibility of one or two shorter follow-up interviews, and the provision of copies of relevant documents.

This research project was initiated as a result of increased interest in the importance of the role of superintendents in improving educational effectiveness. For example, I noted at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Boston in April 1990 that suggestions for reform of North American education at the school level were being supplemented with research and suggestions focused on the superintendency.

The University of Alberta has provided funds for this research project and has approved the ethical aspects of the study. *All information will be treated confidentially and anonymously*, and participants will have the right to withdraw from the project at any time. The fact that you have been selected as a participant will not be disclosed by the researchers to any other person. Tony Genge, a Newfoundland superintendent who is currently a doctoral student in this department, will be assisting me with the interviews and analyses of opinions and other information. A substantial amount of the information obtained will be used for his doctoral dissertation. A detailed report will be made available to all participating superintendents.

In view of general interest in this research topic and special interest in Alberta in this particular project, I hope that you will agree to be involved and look forward to receiving a positive reply from you at your earliest convenience. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

E. A. Holdaway
Professor

Office telephone: 492-3690
Home telephone: 436-3042

APPENDIX C

Initial Interview Schedule for Superintendents

Initial Interview Schedule for Superintendents

(a) Purpose of the Study - To obtain opinions about how the most organizationally effective superintendents work in their school systems.

(b) Documents - Would you please provide the following documents:

mission statements
district organizational chart
evaluation policies
annual report, 1989-90
newsletters, 1989-90
minutes of central office meetings, 1989-90 (unless confidential)
minutes of principals' meetings, 1989-90

(c) Ethics - This project has been approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Administration, University of Alberta.

(d) System Information:

student enrollment_________
number of assistant superintendents_____Areas?___________________
number of teachers_________
number of schools__________

(e) Professional Experiences and Academic Background:

Total years in the superintendency__________
Date started this superintendency___________
Your highest degree attained______University and year_____________

Interview Questions

1. (a) What are your three top priorities in your role as superintendent?
   (b) What are some specific examples of activities that you perform to achieve these priorities?

2. What criteria (benchmarks, indicators) do you use to judge the overall effectiveness of your school system?

3. (a) What criteria do you use to judge your effectiveness as superintendent?
   (b) What are the three main constraints (barriers, obstacles) which tend to reduce your effectiveness as superintendent?
   (c) Please give some specific examples of how you have tried to reduce the impact of these constraints?

4. (a) What are your priorities for the educational programs in your schools?
   (b) What methods do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational programs in your schools?

5. What methods do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of personnel in your school system?
   (i) At your central office
   (ii) In your schools (administrators and teachers)

6. Please describe the nature of your interactions with each of the following groups as you attempt to achieve your priorities:
   (a) school board chairman
   (b) other school board members
   (c) secretary-treasurer
   (d) other central office staff (e.g., assistant superintendents)
   (e) principals
   (f) teachers
   (g) students
   (h) community (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, service clubs)
   (i) Alberta Education
      (i) Central Office
      (ii) Regional Office
   (j) Conference of Alberta School Superintendents
   (k) Alberta School Trustees' Association
   (l) Alberta Teachers' Association
   (m) your support staff
   (n) others

7. (a) Please describe your preferred style of involvement in school board meetings.
   (b) How are the agendas for your school board meetings established?

8. (a) What are the three most important bases of your influence when you deal with board members?
   (b) What are the three most important bases of your influence when you deal with other educators in your school system?

9. (a) What are your most important personal values?
   (b) How do you try to ensure that these values are reflected in your school system?

10. (a) What do you understand by the term "effective educational leadership"?
   (b) By what methods do you attempt to demonstrate educational leadership in your school system?

11. (a) What are the most important factors that contribute to superintendent effectiveness?
   (b) What relationship do you see between graduate study in education and superintendent effectiveness?
   (c) What in-service activities in which you have been engaged have been most valuable in enhancing your effectiveness as superintendent?

12. In what ways do you consider that your administrative behavior is superior to that of superintendents who could be considered as less organizationally effective?

13. How does your position as superintendent affect your personal life?

14. (a) Some observers have suggested that superintendents should be willing to make more innovative decisions in order to improve schooling. However, such actions can carry the risk of superintendents losing their jobs if the decisions have negative consequences. How can the need for educational change be balanced with the need for the superintendents' employment security?
   (b) How can superintendents be protected from the consequences of termination on short notice?

15. (a) On average, how many hours per week do you spend in schools?
   (b) In which activities do you usually become involved during your school visits?

16. How did your method of operation change when superintendents were designated as "Chief Executive Officers" in the 1988 School Act?

17. Please comment upon any other relevant matters.

APPENDIX D

Follow-up Letter to Superintendents

«date»

Private and Confidential

«Fullname»
«Position»
«IF Department=""»«ELSE»«Department»
«ENDIF»«address»
«city», «province»
«postal code»

Dear «name»:

In my letter of 18 September 1990 about the study that Tony Genge and I are conducting on superintendent effectiveness, I indicated there would possibly be one or two shorter follow-up interviews and that some preliminary findings would be sent to you.

Copies of the following tables are enclosed for your information and feedback:

Table 4.1	Frequency of Mention of Three Highest Priorities of Superintendents
Table 5.1	Frequency of Mention of Educational Program Priorities
Table 6.1	Frequency of Mention of Criteria Used to Judge the Effectiveness of School Systems
Table 6.2	Frequency of Mention of Criteria Used to Judge the Effectiveness of Superintendents
Table 6.3	Frequency of Mention of Constraints Upon Superintendent Effectiveness
Table 6.5	Frequency of Mention of Behaviors Used to Demonstrate Educational Leadership
Table 6.6	Frequency of Mention of Factors Contributing to Superintendent Effectiveness

Tony Genge (464-3445) will soon be contacting your office by telephone to make arrangements to obtain your responses to the attached follow-up questions. Also, your written responses on any issues relative to the study which you deem appropriate would be welcome. Thank you again for your participation in this study and for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

E. A. Holdaway
Professor

Telephone: 492-3690 (Office)
436-3042 (Home)
Fax: 492-2024

APPENDIX E

Follow-up Interview Schedule for Superintendents

Follow-up Interview Schedule for Superintendents

1. As shown in Table 4.1, "planning" received the highest response frequency (4) for system priorities. Further analysis showed that the 4 superintendents making this response were all employed in "large" school systems, i.e., those over 3,000 students. What is your reaction to this finding?

2. As shown in Table 5.1, by far the most frequent responses (5 each) for educational program priorities were received for "implement the programs of Alberta Education properly," "provide programs for special needs students," and "develop programs to help alleviate social problems." What are your reactions to these responses and to the other factors associated with Table 5.1?

3. As shown in Table 6.2, 12 superintendents out of 13 identified "annual formal board evaluations" as a criterion used to judge their effectiveness. Many also identified feedback from various groups. Because these responses did not address specific criteria, would you please identify the main *criteria* used by your school board in its annual evaluation of your performance as superintendent? Also, what appear to be the main *criteria* that are addressed in feedback, either oral or written, about your performance?

4. As shown in Table 6.6, "having people skills" received the highest frequency response for factors contributing to superintendent effectiveness—6 out of 13. "Having a sense of direction" and "having a sound knowledge base" were each mentioned by 3 superintendents. What is your reaction to these responses and to the other factors listed in Table 6.6?

5. What reactions do you have to other information provided in the tables?

6. Do you have any other reactions or comments about the general topic of effectiveness of school superintendents?